Port by Port:

Profiles & Analysis of the Massachusetts Commercial Fishery



The Massachusetts Commercial Fishing Port Profiles, published in 2026, provide an overview of the commercial fishing activity and infrastructure within each municipality for the years 2015-2024. Data sources for the profiles include commercial regional permits, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's (ACCSP) Data Warehouse, and results from harbormaster and fishermen surveys conducted late 2025-early 2026. The 2026 Profiles serve as an update to the Profiles released in 2021.

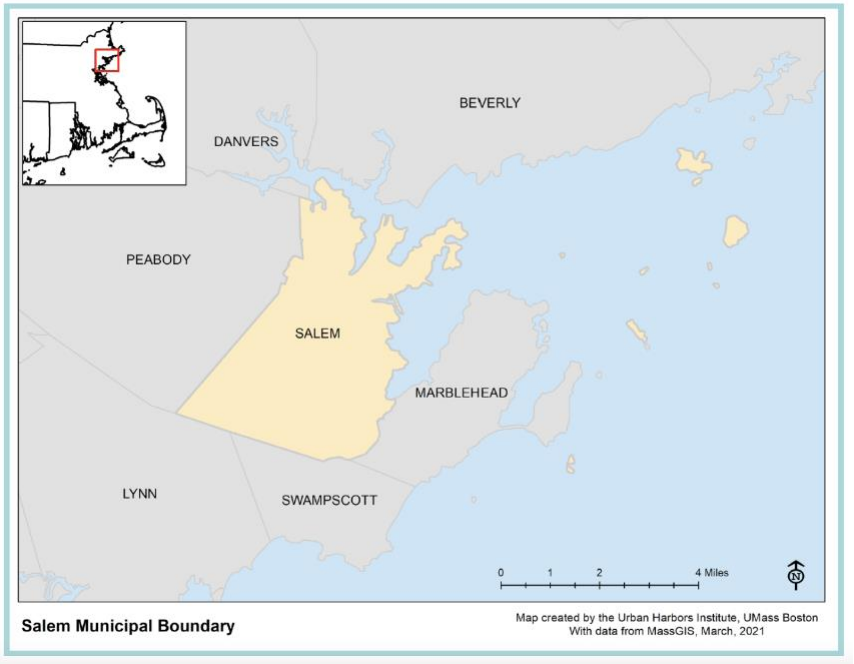
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DIVISION of MARINE FISHERIES

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City of Salem



The City of Salem, located on the North Shore, supports commercial fishing for a variety of species including American lobster, striped bass, and bluefin tuna. Commercial fishing activity centers primarily around Salem Harbor.

This port profile describes commercial fishing activity for the municipality, including economic value, number of people involved, and target species. Information about infrastructure and operations also is provided and broken down by harbor where possible.

Key Terms:

- **Permitted Harvesters:** Commercially permitted resident harvesters
- **Vessels:** Commercially permitted vessels with the municipality listed as the homeport
- **Trips:** Discrete commercial trips unloading fish or shellfish
- **Active Permitted Harvesters:** Commercially permitted harvesters with at least one reported transaction in a year
- **Active Dealers:** Permitted dealers with at least one reported purchase from a harvester in a year
- **Ex-Vessel Value:** Total amount ($) paid directly to permitted harvesters by dealers at the first point of sale

Sources: DMF Permitting and Statistics Data; ACCSP Data Warehouse

The Commercial Fishing Fleet

The Salem commercial fishing fleet averaged about 8 active harvesters per year from 2015-2024. Year-to-year variations occurred and resulted in a minimum of 3 active harvesters in 2015 and 2016 and a maximum of 14 in 2024 (Figure 1). In recent years, the number of active harvesters increased. These numbers do not include for-hire/charter fishing activity.[1]

2024 Fleet Snapshot

29 permitted harvesters with a Salem address

44 vessels with a Salem homeport

106 trips landing in Salem

14 active permitted harvesters landing in Salem

8 active dealers purchasing in Salem

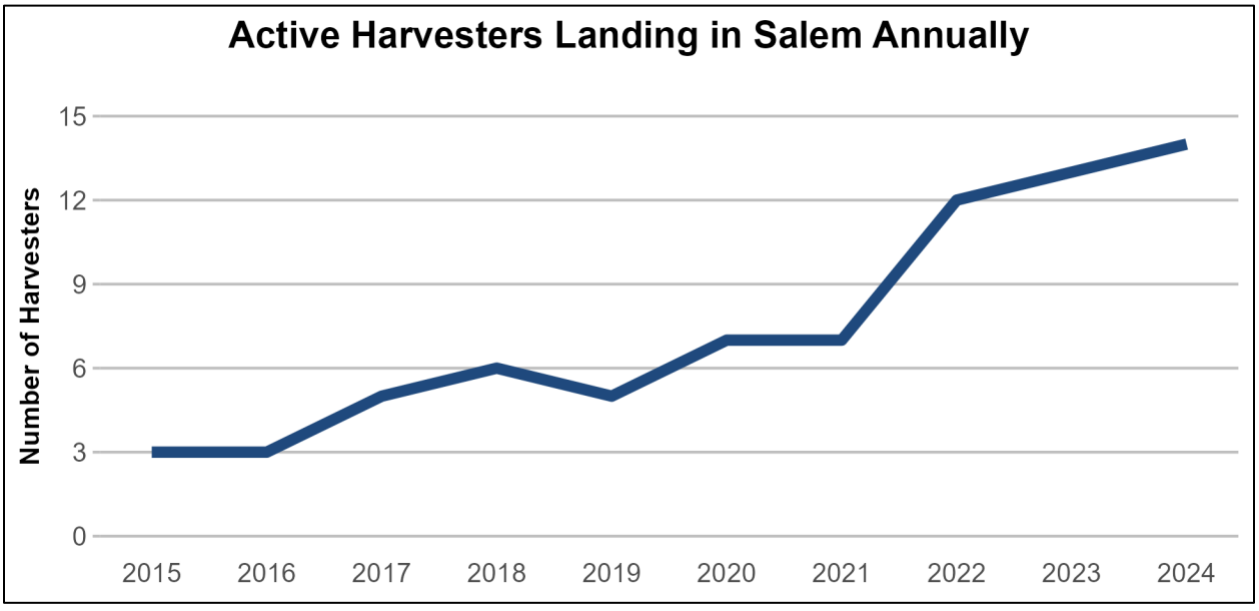


Figure 1: The number of active harvesters landing in Salem from 2015-2024.

[1] COVID-19 may have affected the number of active harvesters.

Sources: DMF Permitting and Statistics Data; ACCSP Data Warehouse

Landings and Economic Value

Salem's commercial landings averaged 57,203 pounds and $252,205 in ex-vessel value per year from 2015-2024. Excluding confidential data, year-to-year variations in landings resulted in a minimum of 29,294 pounds ($121,807) in 2020 and a maximum of 134,222 pounds ($198,196) in 2023. Ex-vessel value peaked in 2021 at $765,914 (Figures 2 and 3). In recent years, the ex-vessel value has remained fairly stable, while the amount of landings spiked in 2023 to around 134,000 pounds. These numbers do not include for-hire/charter fishing activity. Data from the following figures are also available in table form in Appendix B.[2]

2024 Economic Value Snapshot

35,569 pounds of catch with an ex-vessel value of **$219,023**

2024 Top-Ranked Species by Dollar Value

American Lobster
Bluefin Tuna
Striped Bass



Source: Thomas Hoopes

[2] COVID-19 reduced landings in most commercial fisheries in 2020. Inflation drove higher ex-vessel values through 2021 and still affects them, but prices are now less variable.

Sources: DMF Permitting and Statistics Data; ACCSP Data Warehouse; 2025/2026 Harbormaster and Fishermen Surveys

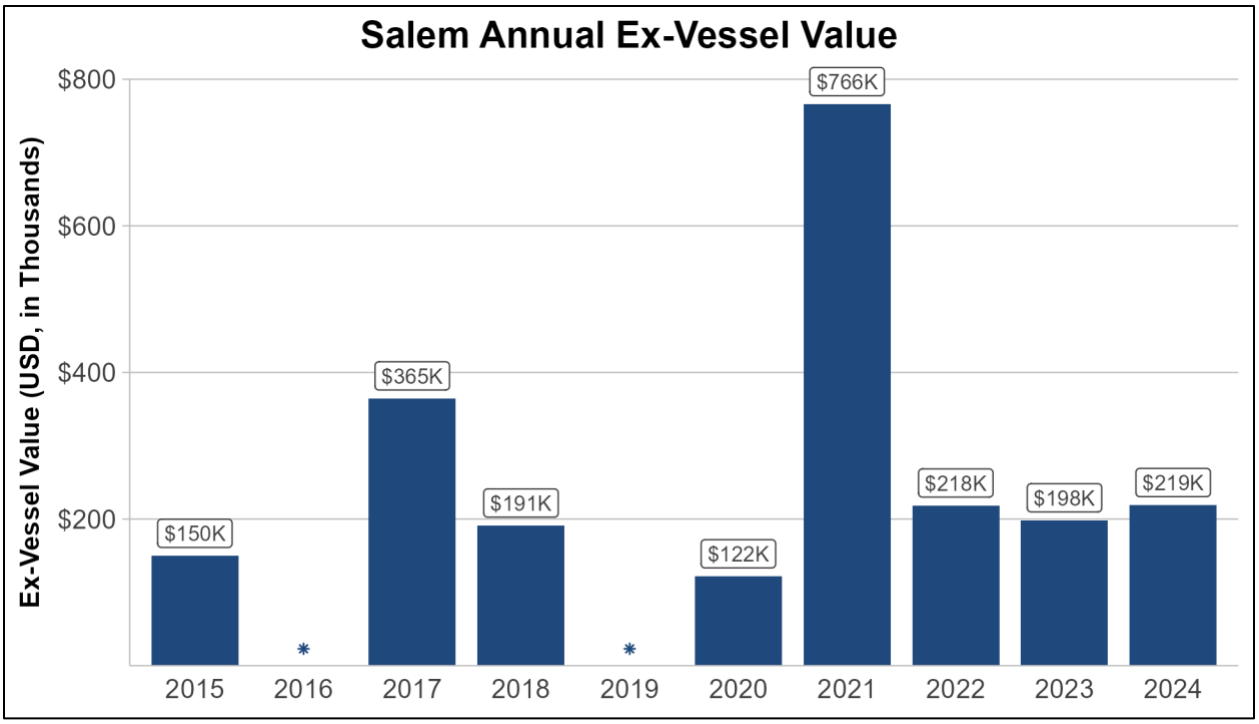


Figure 2: Annual ex-vessel value for Salem from 2015-2024. These graphs do not account for inflation. An asterisk is present where data are confidential.

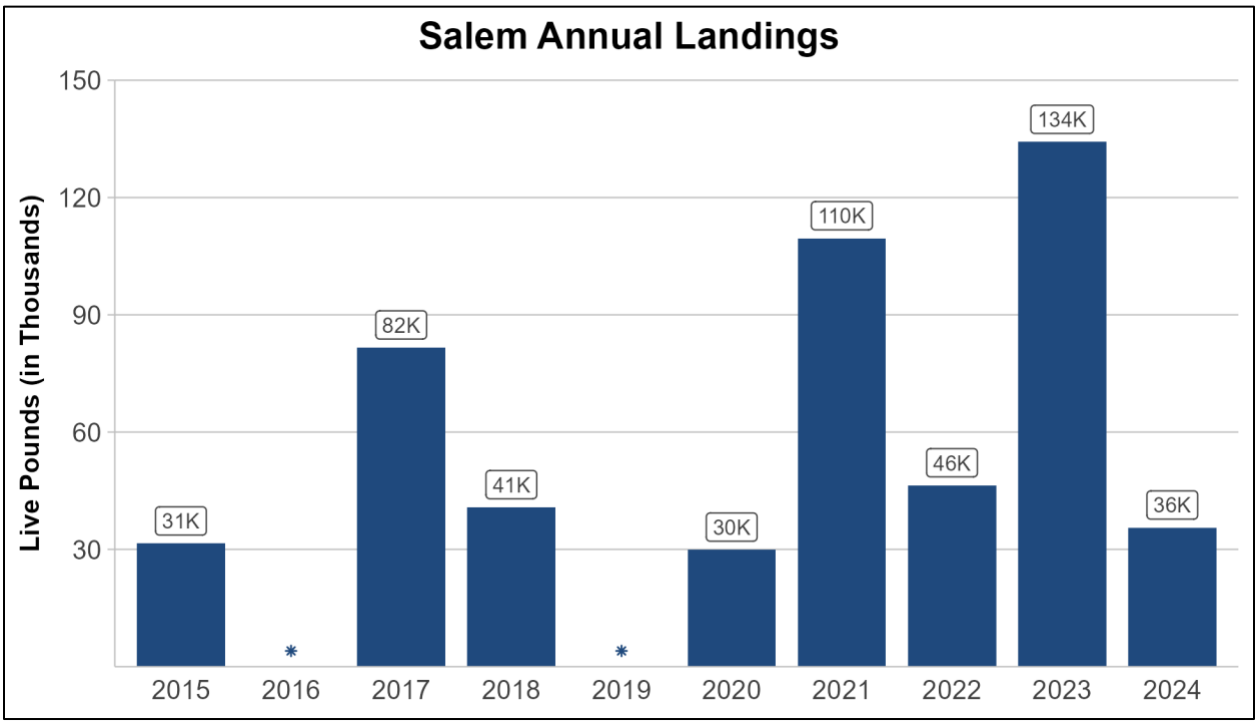


Figure 3: Annual total live pounds for Salem from 2015-2024. An asterisk is present where data are confidential.

Sources: DMF Permitting and Statistics Data; ACCSP Data Warehouse; 2025/2026 Harbormaster and Fishermen Surveys

Infrastructure and Operations

Salem's main commercial fishing harbor is **Salem Harbor**. Details about the harbor are provided below.

Salem Harbor

Salem Harbor is an active working waterfront that supports a small but active commercial fishing fleet. The Salem Harbor Port Authority (SHPA) operates a commercial marina that traditionally supports excursions and some fisheries in the summer, as well as the lobster fishery. SHPA also accommodates commercial vessel wet storage throughout the winter. Dockage at the commercial marina is allocated/assigned from responses to an RFP process.

Active Commercial Fisheries

Commercial fisheries operating out of this port include:

- Lobster
- Rod & Reel
- For-Hire/Charter



Source: Thomas Hoopes

Sources: DMF Permitting and Statistics Data; ACCSP Data Warehouse; 2025/2026 Harbormaster and Fishermen Surveys

Infrastructure Available

The following infrastructure and services are available in this harbor:

Table 1: Infrastructure and services available in Salem Harbor.

Infrastructure/Service	Yes/No
Mooring space	Yes
Trash disposal	No
Commercial offloading	No
Hoist	No
Ice	No
Dock space	Yes
Fueling stations	No
Vessel repair	Yes
Parking for fishermen[3]	No
Parking for seafood trucks	No
Launch ramp	Yes
Gear storage	No
Bait storage	No
Broadside berthing	No

Municipal Fees

The following fees are charged in this harbor:

Table 2: Fees charged in Salem Harbor. "N/A" signifies that infrastructure is not available.

Type	Price
Moorings	$7 per foot
Slips	$7 per foot
Anchoring	$0
Broadside berthing	N/A
Transient unloading	$0
Dockage	$7 per foot
Ramp	$5 per launch

[3] While there is no designated parking for the commercial fishing industry, public parking is available and is used by the industry. Additionally, both parking for seafood trucks and commercial unloading is through coordination with the SHPA and/or Harbormaster Office.

Sources: DMF Permitting and Statistics Data; ACCSP Data Warehouse; 2025/2026 Harbormaster and Fishermen Surveys

Harbor Highlights & Challenges

Fishermen noted a shortage of dock space and an interest in additional space dedicated to commercial fishing activity. In addition, fishermen expressed interest in additional services including ice and fuel.



Source: Thomas Hoopes

Sources: 2025/2026 Fishermen Survey