



THE STATE OF THE FISHERY

SEA URCHIN

Sea urchins are related to starfish and sand dollars. They graze on kelp, algae, and other organic matter, and are eaten by crabs, large fish, marine mammals, and birds.

The State of Maine Department of Marine Resources manages the sea urchin fishery.

Most sea urchins are harvested by hand. Fishermen scuba dive to collect urchins in net bags.

The Maine sea urchin fishery first boomed in the 1980's, when the demand for uni (urchin eggs) began to grow.



When the urchin population fell, crabs became a big problem. They ate the urchins and their larvae before they reached maturity.

To protect urchin, it is best to protect the ecosystem and the other animals and plants that live with urchins. This is called a multi species or ecosystem-based strategy.



The sea urchin fishery in Maine collapsed around 1990. Now there are very strict regulations in place for urchin gatherers. These regulations ensure that any urchins at the store are responsibly gathered.