

# Clam dredge framework update

## Industry-suggested alternative and Committee recommendations

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**September 27, 2018**



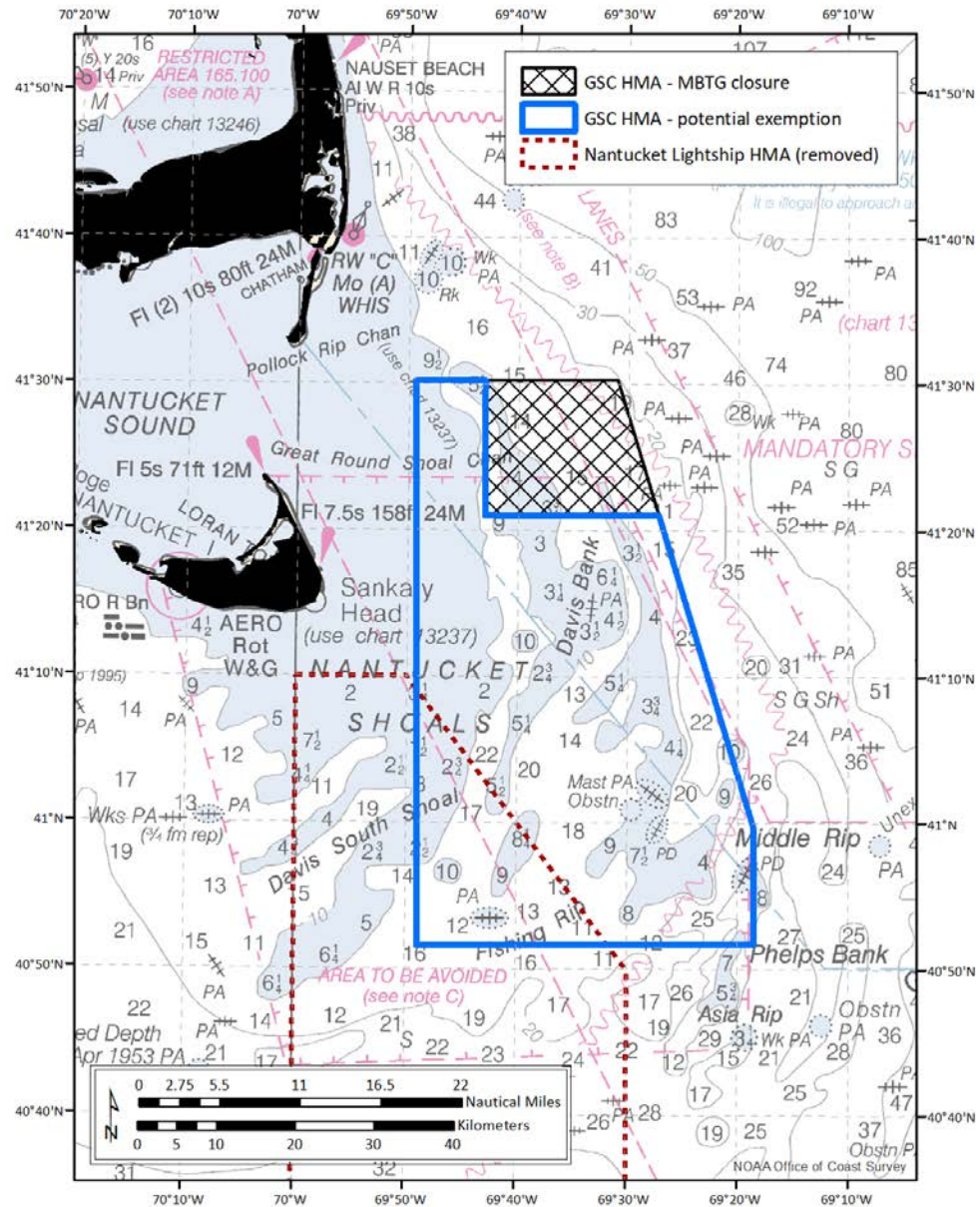
New England  
Fishery Management Council

# Timeline

- May 22 – Habitat Committee recommended alternatives for analysis
- June 14 – Council remanded framework back to Habitat Committee
- June 25 – Exec Director contacted clam and mussel industry members requesting that they suggest alternatives by early August
- August 23 – Alternatives suggested by Daniel Cohen, Domenic Santoro via correspondence
- August 28 – Habitat Committee meeting to discuss/develop range of alternatives (additional clam exemption alternative received)
- Week of September 18 – PDT meeting
- Week of September 24 – VMS study fleet commences
- **September 27 – Council meeting – review progress to date; provide guidance**
- November 1 – Enforcement Committee meeting
- November 7 – Habitat Committee meeting
- December 4-6 – Council meeting, Newport; final action on framework

# Statement of work (excerpt)

Council intends [...] to identify areas within the HMA that are currently fished or contain high energy sand and gravel that could be suitable for a hydraulic clam dredging exemption that balances [...] the SC/OQ fishery with the requirement to minimize adverse fishing effects on habitat to the extent practicable and is consistent with the underlying objectives of OHA2.



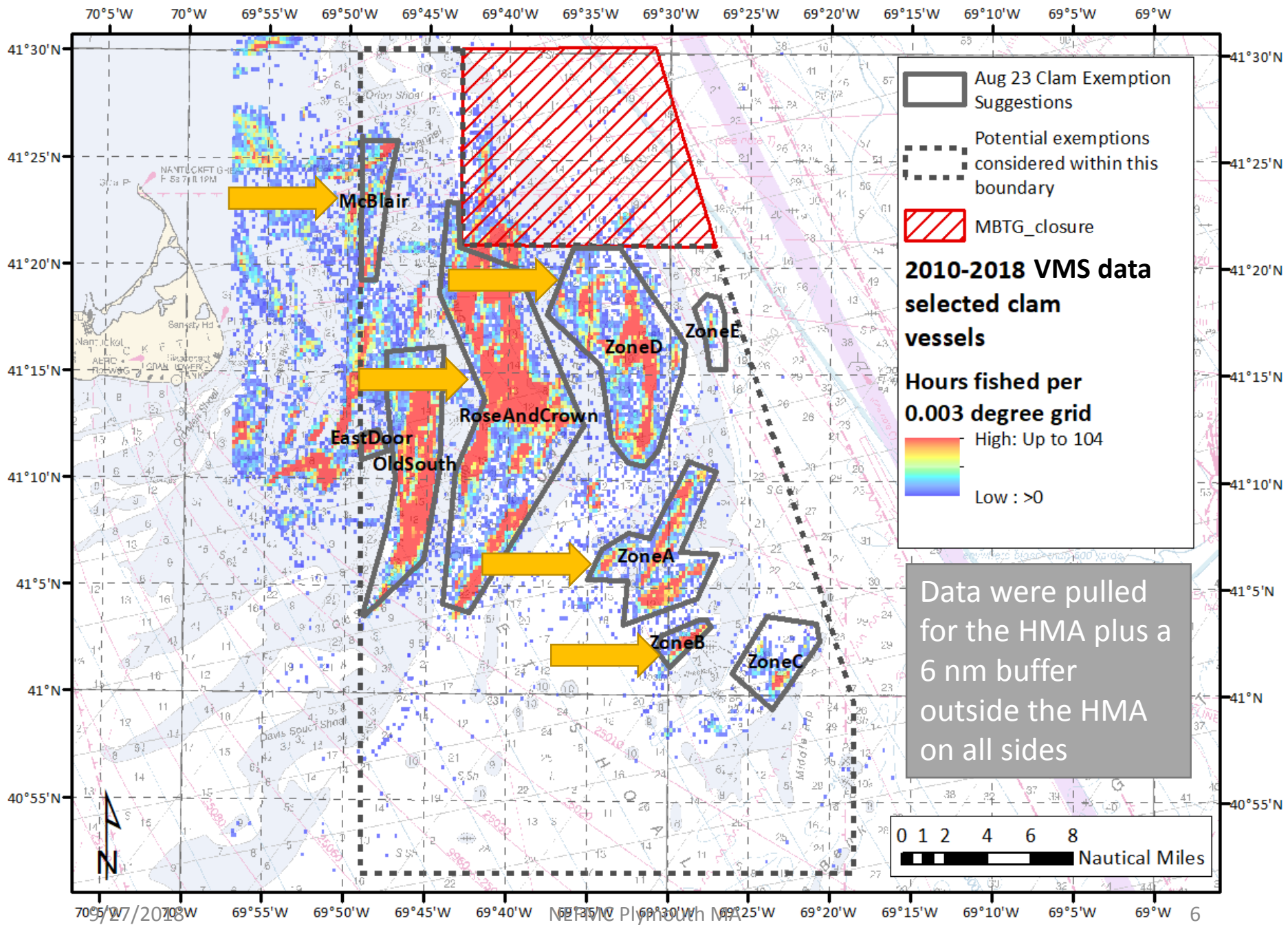
Clam Dredge Framework - Map credit: NEFMC - Date: April 2, 2018

# Industry-proposed Clam exemption areas – Option 1 (VMS-based)

- See August 23 letter from Daniel Cohen, additional comments September 17 about seasonal closures and rotational management
- Based on distribution of fishing effort according to 2010-2018 vessel monitoring system data
- Nine areas, ranging in size from 4-218 km<sup>2</sup> (total 584 km<sup>2</sup>). Makes up 26% of the 2,234 km<sup>2</sup> area where exemptions are under consideration.
- Industry working with NOAA OLE to increase polling rate to 5-minute intervals on up to 4 vessels so they can test their ability to operate within areas of this size and shape – will discuss results at 11/1 Enforcement Ctte

# Option 1 (VMS-based) – August 28 Committee recommendations

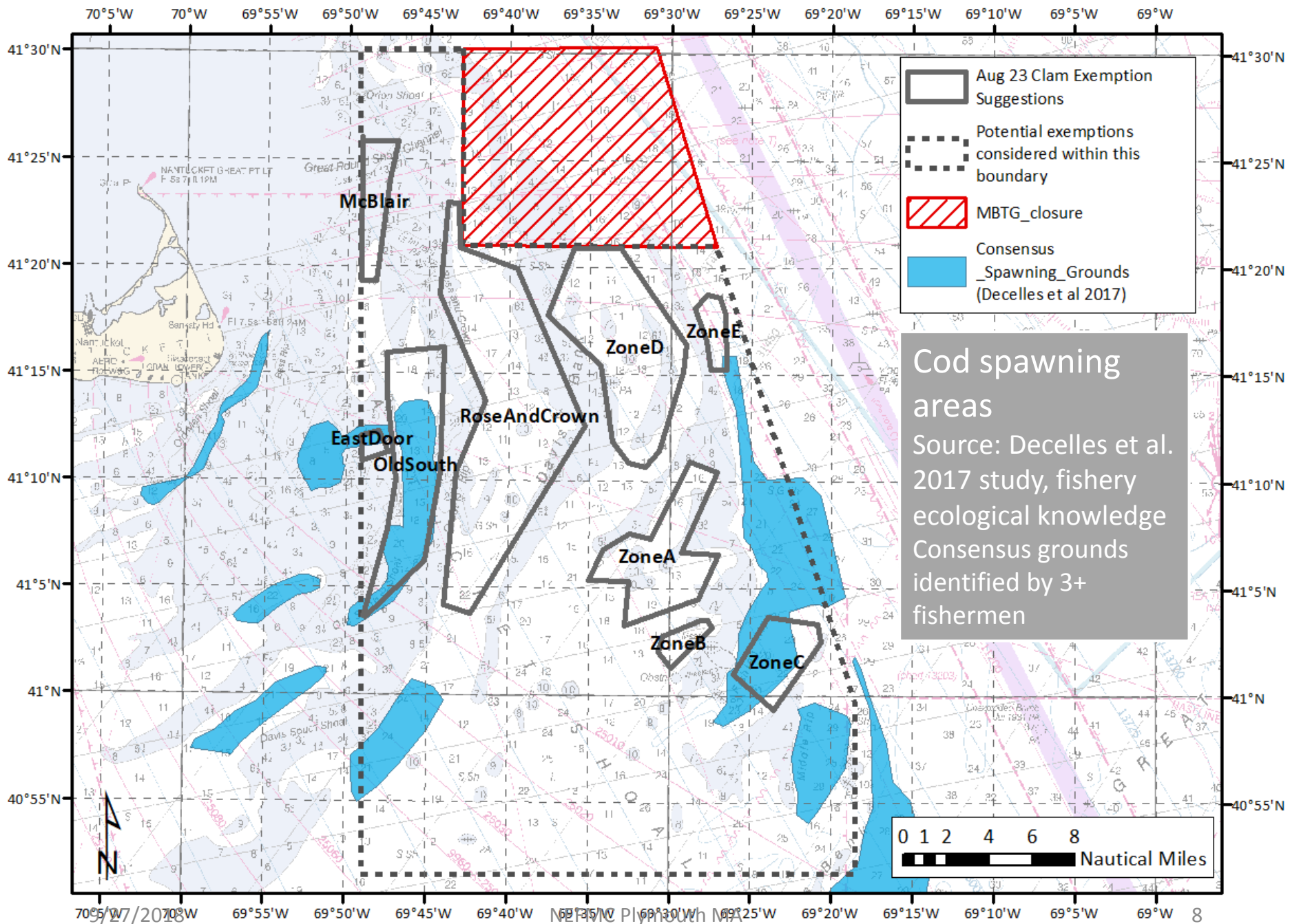
- Focus on 5 of the 9 areas – McBlair, Rose and Crown, Area A, Area B, Area D – concerns about overlap with cod spawning grounds
- Evaluate a rotational approach (2-3 sets of areas, 7+ year closure interval) considering:
  - Minimization of adverse effects to EFH
  - Clam distribution including by age/size
  - Historical effort patterns
- PDT is working on the above evaluation; met on September 18 and drafting a response memo for November 7 Committee meeting
- Committee is not recommending further development of the exemption alternatives they put forward in June



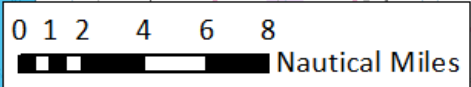
# Hours fished by area – VMS data

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Hours fished</b>
Zone A (Ctte recommendation)	5,271
Zone B (Ctte recommendation)	837
Zone C	791
Zone D (Ctte recommendation)	12,039
Zone E	221
East Door	741
McBlair (Ctte recommendation)	2,116
Old South	16,474
Rose and Crown (Ctte recommendation)	34,894
<b>Entire exemption area</b>	<b>81,366</b>

- All 9 areas include approximately 90% of the hours fished in the HMA
- The 5 areas recommend by the Committee account for 68%



**Cod spawning areas**  
 Source: Decelles et al. 2017 study, fishery ecological knowledge  
 Consensus grounds identified by 3+ fishermen

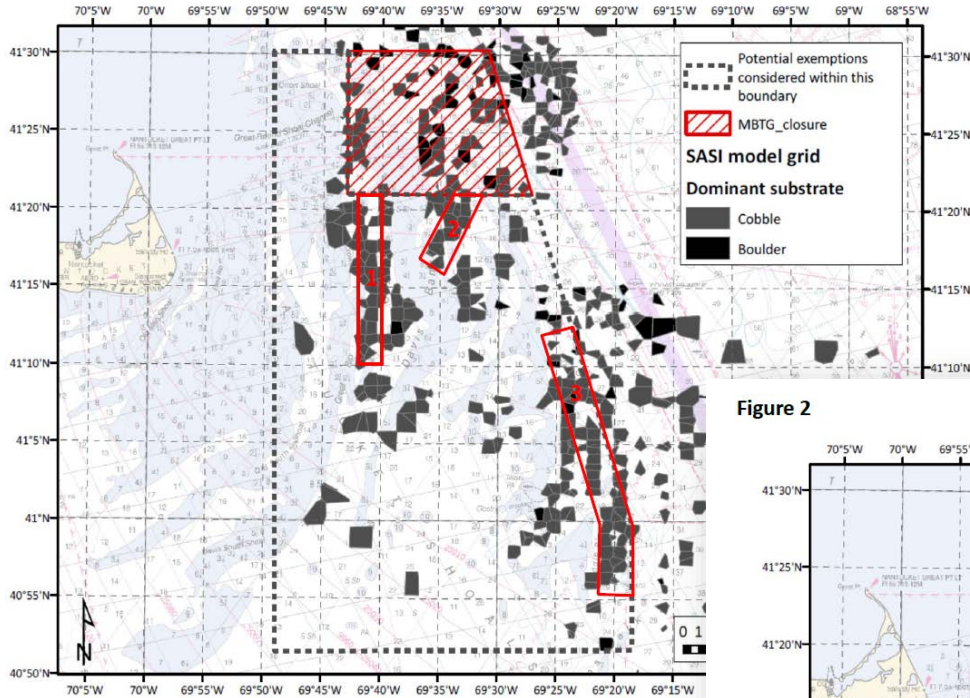




# Industry-proposed Clam exemption areas – Option 2

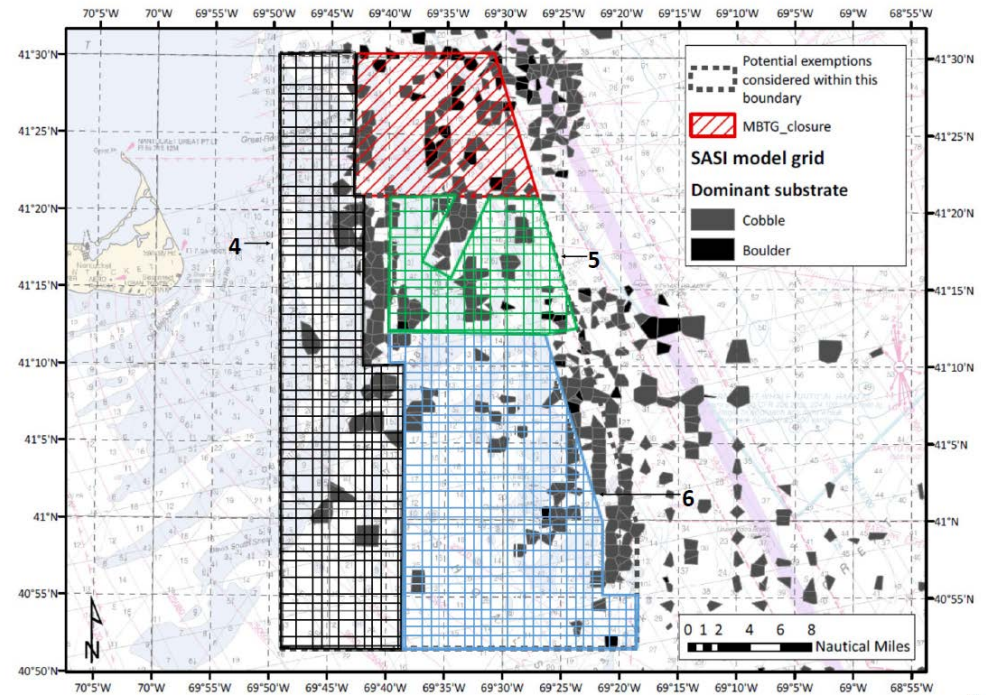
- See August 28 letter from clam industry
- Designed as a 2 stage rotational management program
  - Long-term open area; three areas completely closed; remaining two areas rotate
- Committee did not recommend further development of these specific boundaries, but agreed with pursuing a rotational management approach

Figure 1



Areas in red = closed  
(Listed as 1, 2, 3 in letter)

Figure 2



Areas in black (area 4) = open  
Green (area 5) = rotational  
Blue (area 6) = rotational

# Mussel exemption areas

- See August 23 and September 19 letters from Domenic Santoro and supporting letters from American Mussel
- Based on distribution of mussel beds identified using various sources – beds fished during 1980s/1990s, exploratory mussel dredging during 2017, areas where clam vessels have caught mussels, areas where August 2017 clam dredge survey caught larger numbers of mussels
- Area is along the western edge of HMA (413 km<sup>2</sup>); goal was to identify areas with mussel beds and fewer observations of complex habitat
- Committee did not recommend this exemption area for further development, but did endorse EFP concept (see document 4, draft letter to GARFO)
- EFP application withdrawn (for now) on September 18, but potential for overlap between any future mussel dredging (EFP or more permanent exemption) and clam exemption areas should still be discussed

