

#1
Revised

Scallop Committee Report

CONNOR BUCKLEY

NEFMC

MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT

JUNE 24, 2026



New England Fishery
Management Council

TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- Update on 2026 Scallop Surveys, FY 2026 fishery performance
- Scallop Framework 42
 - Catch specifications for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default)
 - Develop sub-management areas within the NGOM
 - Develop region-specific DAS allocation for the Limited Access component
 - **Council Action: Initiate Framework Adjustment 42**
- Update on Scallop Strategic Plan implementation
- Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Priorities
 - **Council Action: Approve Scallop RSA priorities for 2027-2028**



FY2025 FINISHED ON A STRONG NOTE

Permit Type	Open Bottom	Area I	Area II	Total Landings	APL	Sub-ACL
Limited Access	12.0 mil	2.9 mil	3.5 mil	18.4 mil	17.0 mil	35.0 mil.
LAGC IFQ	0.4 mil	0.4 mil	No trips	1.0 mil	0.9 mil	1.9 mil

108% of Projected Landings

112% of Projected Landings incl. 155k lb carryover

Open bottom LPUE:

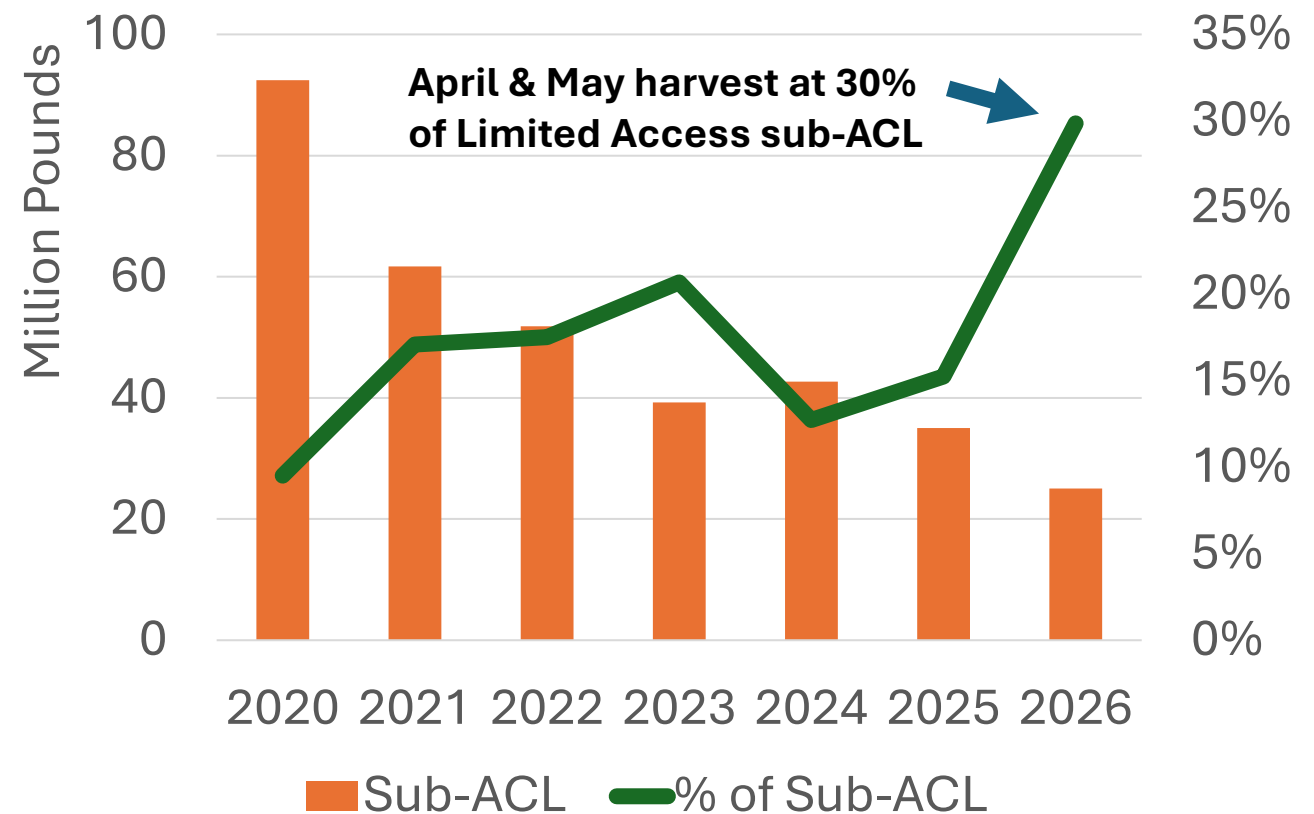
- Slightly improved from FY 2024 minimum
- Unanticipated windfall harvests on Stellwagen Bank (south of 42° 20') and the Nantucket Lightship – West



AND A STRONG START TO FY2026; LPUE BACK ABOVE 2000 LB/DAY

- Strong open bottom landings in the Mid-Atlantic Bight
 - High survival and strong growth of ~4-year old cohort
- Increased open area catch rates relative to 2024-2025 (2100-2400 lb/day)
- Fleet recently spread out from the MAB to the Channel and harvesting remaining 2025 allocations in Area II

If Limited Access sub-ACL is exceeded, DAS reduction in subsequent fishing year equal to excess landings



SCALLOP SURVEYS ARE UNDERWAY

Gulf of Maine

- Declines on Stellwagen Bank, but healthy biomass on Jeffreys Ledge. Patches of 1 and 2-year-old scallops

Georges Bank

- Recruitment noted in southern Area II, with few sea stars
- Low abundance in the Southern Flank, and large numbers of sea stars – except for around a hotspot noted in 2025 surveys

Nantucket Lightship

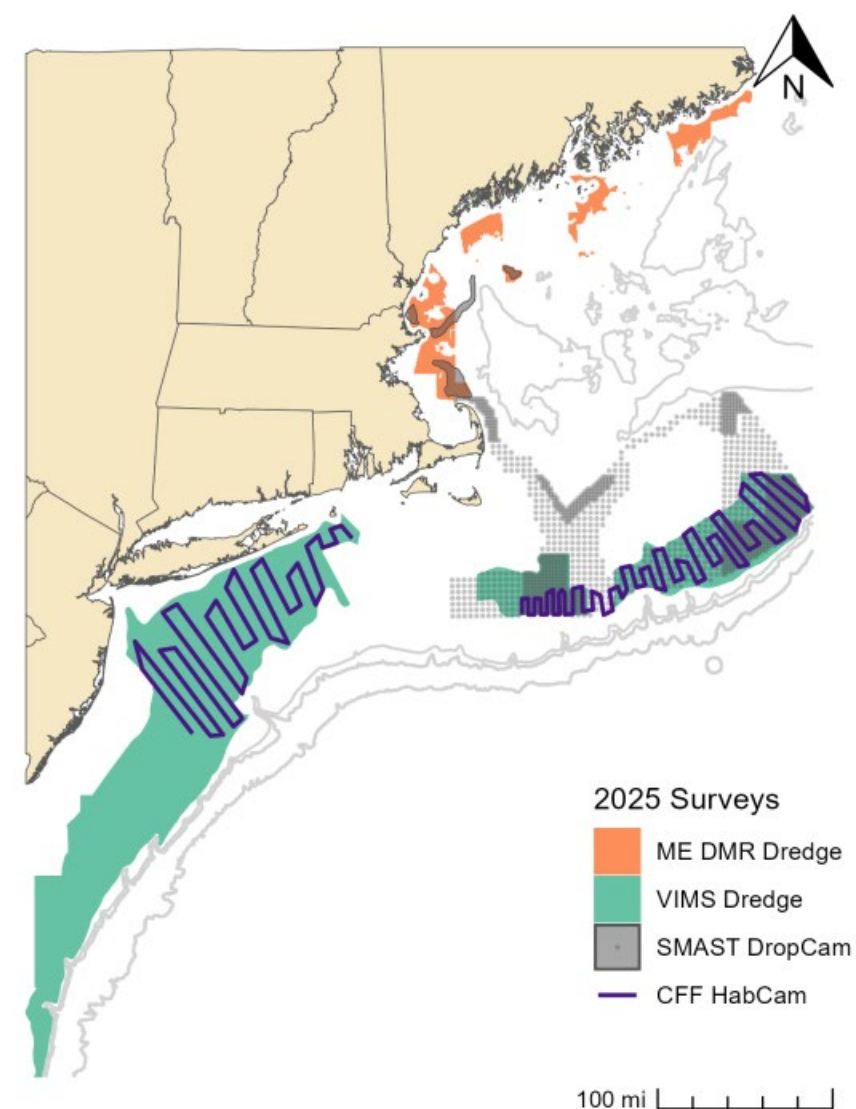
- Continued growth and very high-densities in the NLS-South

Mid-Atlantic

- High biomass and yield in Elephant Trunk and Hudson Canyon, no signs of recruitment and low incidence of shell blister and nematodes



New England Fishery
Management Council



2026 RSA-funded survey coverage will be nearly the same as 2025, except for:

- No sampling in ME DMR exploratory areas
- Increased sampling by SMAST in NLS-W and Southern Flank hotspot

SCALLOP OUTLOOK BY QUARTER IN 2026

Key:

Staff led project

NMFS led project with Staff
and/or PDT involvement

Possible follow-up and/or
implementation

External-led project with
Staff and/or PDT involved

Calendar Year	Jan – Mar		Apr - Jun		July - Sept		Oct - Dec
✓ Framework 40	Final Submission	Rulemaking					
FY 27/28 Specifications				2026 Field Season	Framework: 2027/2028 (default) Specifications		
Framework 42		Analysis to develop measures for regional DAS, NGOM sub-areas					
Annual Scallop RSA Work		NOFO	NOFO Closes	Proposal Reviews	Share Day	Award Decisions	
Develop Projection methods	RFP Solicitation		Contractor work				
✓ LAGC IFQ Program Review	Final report						
Strategic Plan			Review Strategic Plan and develop 2027-2029 Work Plan				



New England Fishery
Management Council

DEVELOPING NEW STOCK PROJECTION METHODS FOR SCALLOP CATCH SETTING

Contract awarded to SMAST to develop a new stock projection model for Council use in setting annual catch specifications

- Drs. Adam Delargy, Steve Cadrin, and Kevin Stokesbury are PIs

Project Tasks

1. Complete a written review of the Scallop Area Management Simulation (SAMS) model methods and relevant literature
2. Develop new projection models and conduct retrospective testing and comparison with previous SAMS model outputs, fishery, and survey data
3. Develop a new LPUE model for improved DAS calculation



VIABLE STOCK PROJECTION MODEL READY FOR USE IN SETTING FY 2028 SPECIFICATIONS

Timeline of Deliverables

- **April 1, 2027:** PDT receives draft methods and results
- **May 1, 2027:** SSC receives presentation on methods
- **June 4, 2027:** Technical report (methods, results, recommendations, code, data) provided to Council staff
- **June 30, 2027:** Multi-user accessible projection model available
 - Full documentation
 - Reproducible workflows
 - User-friendly guidance materials



LONG-TERM SCALLOP STRATEGIC PLAN

Scallop Strategic Plan was developed to define a shared vision for the direction of the scallop fishery over the next 3-5 years and provide actionable steps to get there

- Informed by 4 visioning sessions and input from Council members, NOAA Fisheries staff, and scallop fishermen and processors from across the region.
- Highlighted 9 overall objectives and 29 strategies to work towards those objectives
- Align implementation of the Scallop Strategic Plan with the Holistic Strategic Plan as it is fleshed out – already a lot of overlap between the two.

Today's Objective: Provide an update on Scallop Strategic Plan implementation

No Council action required



SCALLOP STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

How do we get from reactive → proactive?

Proposal – Develop 3-Year Work Plan

1. AP & Committee identify highest-priority items from the Scallop Strategic Plan. Sequence work items alongside required annual work priorities for 2027 – 2029
2. Scallop PDT additional analysis, develop draft work plan
3. AP & Committee review and finalize work plan in September
4. Committee recommendations for 2027 priorities would go to the Council for final decision in December
5. Summer 2027, AP & Committee reviews planned work for 2028 and discusses new work for 2030



RELEVANT RECENT AND ONGOING RESEARCH

Real-time data collection

- Image-based Research Fleet (CFRF, 2023-2025 awards)
- ScallApp (CFRF, 2024 award)

Rotational management

- Kowaleski et al. (2026) – Evaluating management options for high-density recruitment events
- How Often Do Small Scallop Aggregations Grow Into Fishable Beds and What are the Drivers? (SMASST, 2023 award)

Fishing Practices

- Electronic Monitoring (CFF)

Scallop Enhancement

- VIMS Enhancement Workshop White Paper
- Development of a Scalable Near-Shore Nursery System for Sea Scallops (VIMS, 2023 award)
- Key factors influencing the efficacy of transplanting (CFF, 2022 award)

Gear Modifications

- Tensiometers (CFF, 2024 award)
- 4.25” rings (CFRF, 2025 award)

Scallop biology

- Disentangling recruitment and growth dynamics (WHOI, 2024-2025 award)
- Climate driven changes in growth and distribution (VIMS, 2024-2025 award)
- Combining ocean models and shell archives to quantify and project spatiotemporal changes in scallop functional traits (UConn, 2024-2025 award)
- Recruitment dynamics and impacts of offshore wind development (CFF, WHOI, 2025 award)



SEQUENCE WORK WITH EXPECTED PRIORITIES

Scallop	Required	Complete and submit FW42	Complete early 2027
Scallop	Required	Set ABC/ACL for scallop stock with specifications for FY 2028 (FY 2029 default)	2027
Scallop	Required	Framework to set management measures for FY 2028	2027
Scallop	Ongoing	Scallop RSA Management (Share-Day)	Ongoing
Scallop	Ongoing	Scallop Stock Projection Model	Complete Summer 2027
Scallop	New	?	
Scallop	New	?	



COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Example:

Council work priorities

- Develop reactive management triggers for in-season opening and closing of an access area
- Evaluation of best rotational management practices for small, high-density areas

Scallop PDT analyses

- Evaluate standards for near-real time data to inform reactive management triggers
- Continue development of region-specific DAS allocations

Scallop RSA priorities

- Encourage increased survey effort in an access area at the end of the rotational cycle, and developing a small-scale survey before start of the fishing year

Strategic Plan Objectives

1. **Improve management capacity, flexibility, and responsiveness in a changing environment.**
2. Improve the reliability of annual projections
3. Expand opportunities in the NGOM while maintaining conservative management
4. Improve rotational management performance
5. Improve fishing practices
6. Maintain economic viability of the scallop fleet
7. Maintain a dynamic Scallop Research Set-Aside program
8. Develop infrastructure to support scallop enhancement
9. Improve scallop industry engagement



SCALLOP FRAMEWORK 42:

Scope of Action

- FY2027 & FY2028 (default) specifications
- Region-specific DAS allocations
- NGOM sub-management areas

Today's Objective

- Provide input on action development and timing
 1. Whether to separate specifications from FW42 to streamline review and implementation, and if so,
 2. When to plan to take Final Action on FW42?
- Council motion to initiate Framework 42

Action Milestones

- **Mid-August:** Survey data delivery
- **August 26-27:** Scallop 2-day PDT meeting
- **September:** Survey data updates, projections if available
- **October 7:** SSC meeting on OFL, ABC
- **October - November:** AP & Committee define range of alternatives and select preferred
- **December:** Final action on FW42/Specifications



NORTHERN GULF OF MAINE SUB-MANAGEMENT AREAS SUGGESTED AS A TOOL TO CONTROL EFFORT ON STELLWAGEN BANK

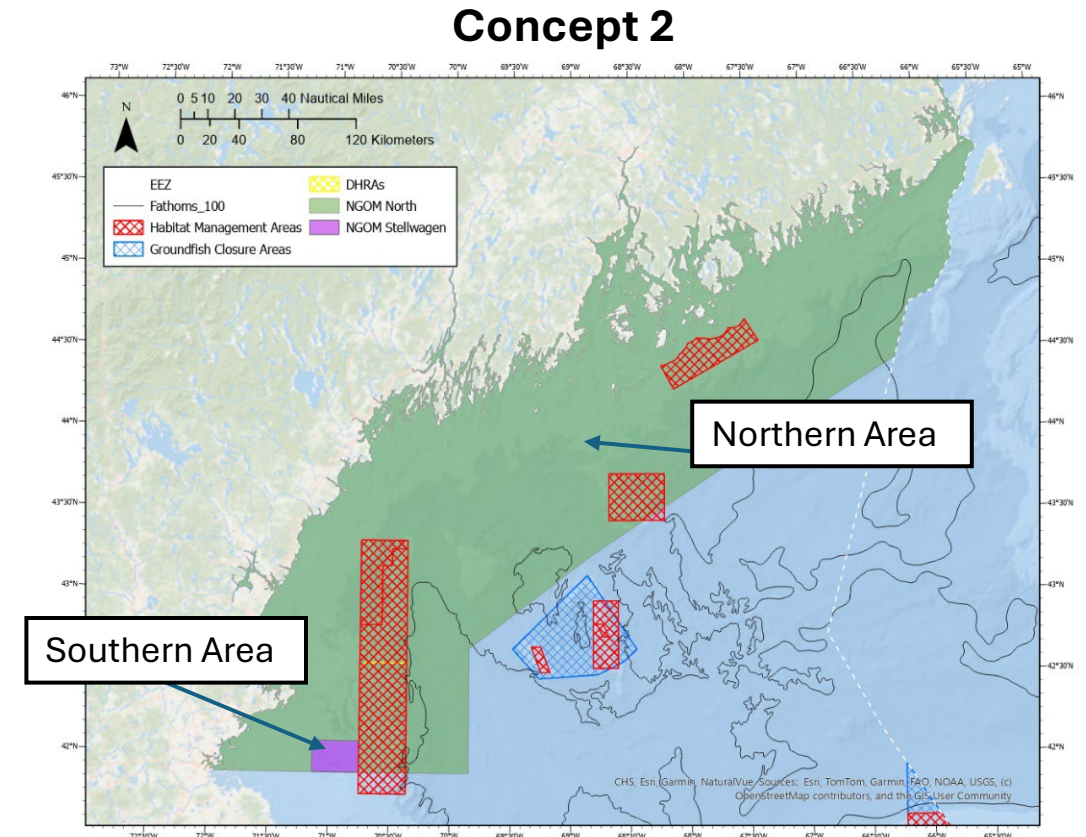
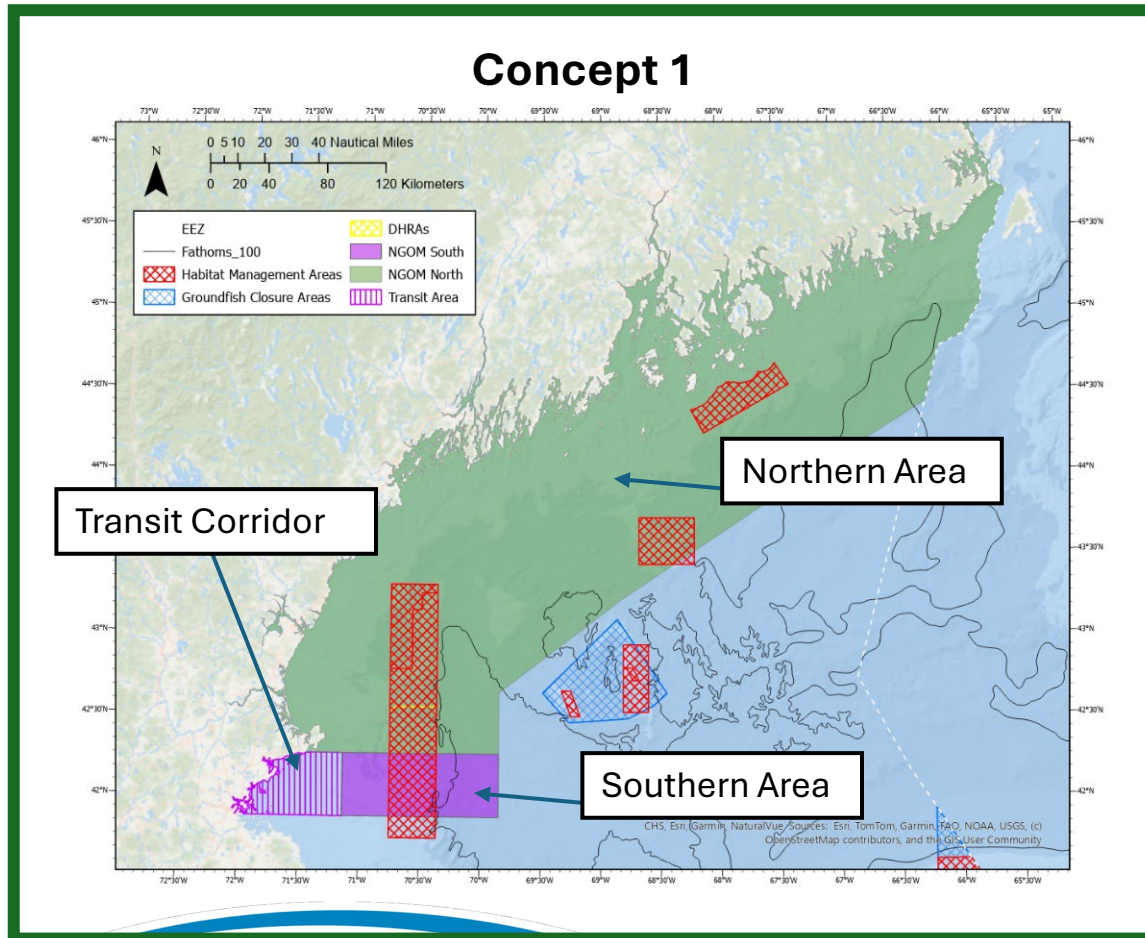
Benefits:

- More accurate F-rate → realized F-rate on Stellwagen Bank in recent years higher than $F=0.15-0.25$
- Shift effort towards other banks/ledges in the NGOM which see little fishing effort, which could help find small scallop beds that are not found during the surveys
- Could extend season length and/or reduce vessel crowding



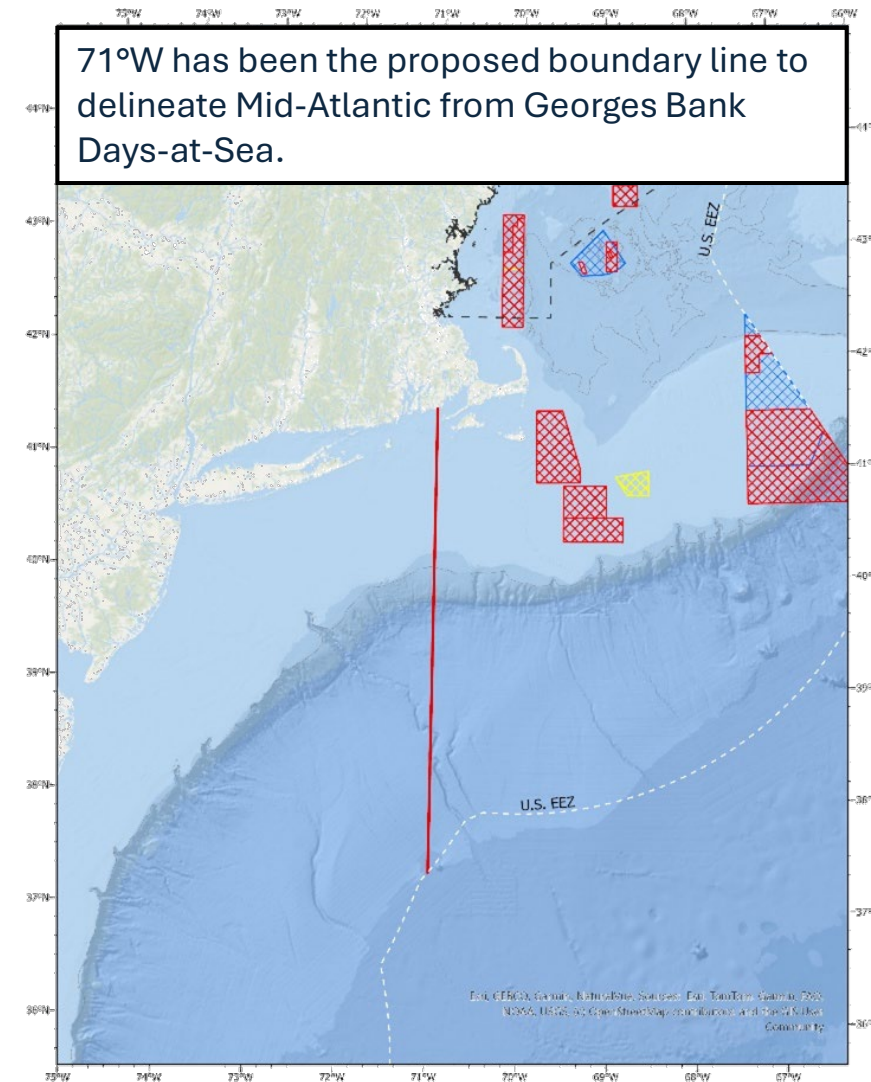
TWO NGOM SUB-AREA BOUNDARY CONCEPTS

Committee tasking to develop alternative using Concept 1 and options for staggered and concurrent access



REGION-SPECIFIC DAS ALLOCATIONS

- Strategic Plan work item - Enabling the Council to allocate DAS separately between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank
- Reduce risk of regional overfishing when large differences in regional LPUE lead to overconcentration of fishing effort
- 2025 stock assessment estimated that overfishing was occurring on Georges Bank in 2023, when this concentration was greatest.
 - 2021-2024: ~70-80% of effort on GB



CONSTRAINTS ON REGION-SPECIFIC DAS SYSTEM

- Avoid overly constraining vessel operational flexibility
- Avoid excessive management complexity that could further strain administration, monitoring, enforcement
- GARFO staff have shared that there is capacity to support regional DAS allocations in FY 2027, but trading of DAS between regions and vessels could not be supported until FY 2028.
 - Ongoing work to rebuild GARFO's Allocation Management System (AMS)



TWO CONCEPTS FOR REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

Committee tasking for PDT to continue analysis and develop Concept 1

Regional DAS allocations (Concept 1): Vessels are allocated Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank DAS, delineated by the 71W boundary line.

Differential DAS Counting (Concept 2): Differential counting, a measure used before for Northeast Multispecies areas, would enable specifying a ratio to adjust DAS charges to increase or decrease realized effort in a region. Differential DAS counting areas would be delineated by the 71W boundary line.

- E.g. an adjustment of 1.2:1 on Georges Bank, a vessel that fished for 14 DAS on Georges Bank would only be charged 16.8 DAS, effectively discounting fishing effort spent in that region. This could also be used to incentivize fishing effort in a region.



SCALLOP FRAMEWORK 42 – MANAGEMENT MEASURES

- **Urgency for FY2027 versus FY2028:** Catch rates have improved in the Mid-Atlantic and declined on Stellwagen Bank. Is FY2027 implementation needed?
- **Timing:** To implement by FY2028, GARFO advises signaling intent with action in 2026 to allow for sufficient lead time for development and implementation (e.g. AMS)
- **Management flexibility:** Implementation of these measures would not restrict the Council to using them (e.g. DAS could still apply broadly across the open bottom)



SCALLOP FRAMEWORK 42 – ACTION DEVELOPMENT

Issue: Recent guidance suggested that for actions with more complex management measures, longer agency review may be the new normal. How can we improve the likelihood that FY 2027 specifications are in place by April 1, 2027?

Proposal: Separate management measures from specifications, and use two smaller, more straightforward actions for timelier implementation.

- Framework 42 (NGOM management measures, Regional DAS) + Specifications package
- Council to take Final Action on specifications in December, but would have flexibility to take Final Action on FW42 (September/December 2026, January/April 2027)

Questions:

1. Whether to separate specifications from FW42 to streamline review and implementation, and if so,
2. When to plan to take Final Action on FW42?



SCALLOP FRAMEWORK 42 – SCENARIOS

Today's Objectives:

- Input on timing and structure of FW 42
- Motion to initiate the action(s)

1 ACTION: FW42 includes FY2027 specs (FY2028 defaults) and management measures

- Standard structure and timeline, with final action in December.
- Very likely the entire rule package is delayed past April 1, 2027.
- If NGOM sub-areas are not in place by April 1, 2027, is it worth delaying the implementation of fishery specifications?



SCALLOP FRAMEWORK 42 – SCENARIOS

Today's Objectives:

- Input on timing and structure of FW 42
- Motion to initiate the action(s)

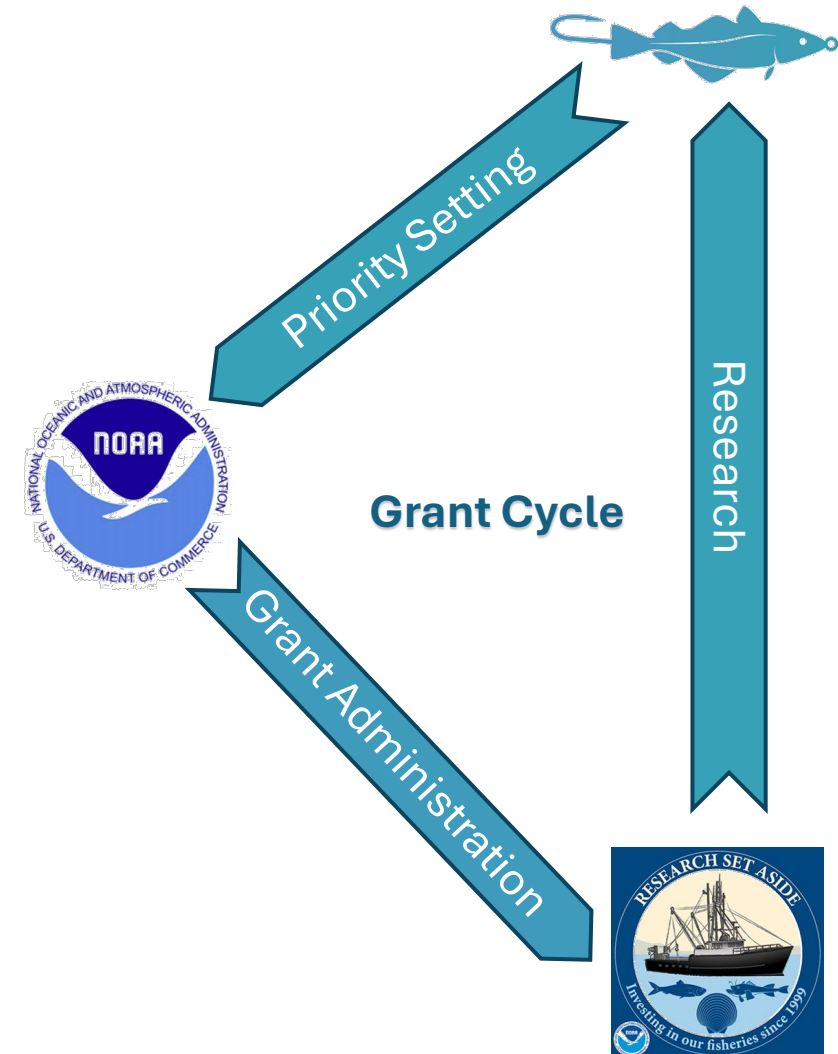
2 ACTIONS: Spec. Package (Dec. Final Action) + FW42 (management measures only)

- September Final Action: Fastest timeline (2 Council meetings), least amount of time for AP/Committee/Public input and the heaviest burden on staff and PDT. *Timing would likely negatively impact development of fishery specifications.*
- December Final Action: Council takes final action on FW42 and Specs Package in December, which would be on standard timeline.
- January/April Final Action: Council forgoes FY2027 implementation in favor of FY2028 implementation.



SCALLOP RESEARCH SET-ASIDE PRIORITIES

- 2026 NOFO was substantially delayed, and no 2027 RSA competition is anticipated. Priority language can guide modifications to existing awards and will be included in the 2028 RSA NOFO.
- Council and GARFO staff are in discussions about potential adjustments to the administration of the grant to improve reliability and flexibility for staff and RSA recipients
- **Today's Objective:** Approve 2027 & 2028 Scallop RSA priorities.



RSA AWARDS: 2010-2025

~ \$238 million awarded over 15-year period

- Total funding = Average scallop price * Set-aside pounds
- Total funding includes *compensation fishing and research*

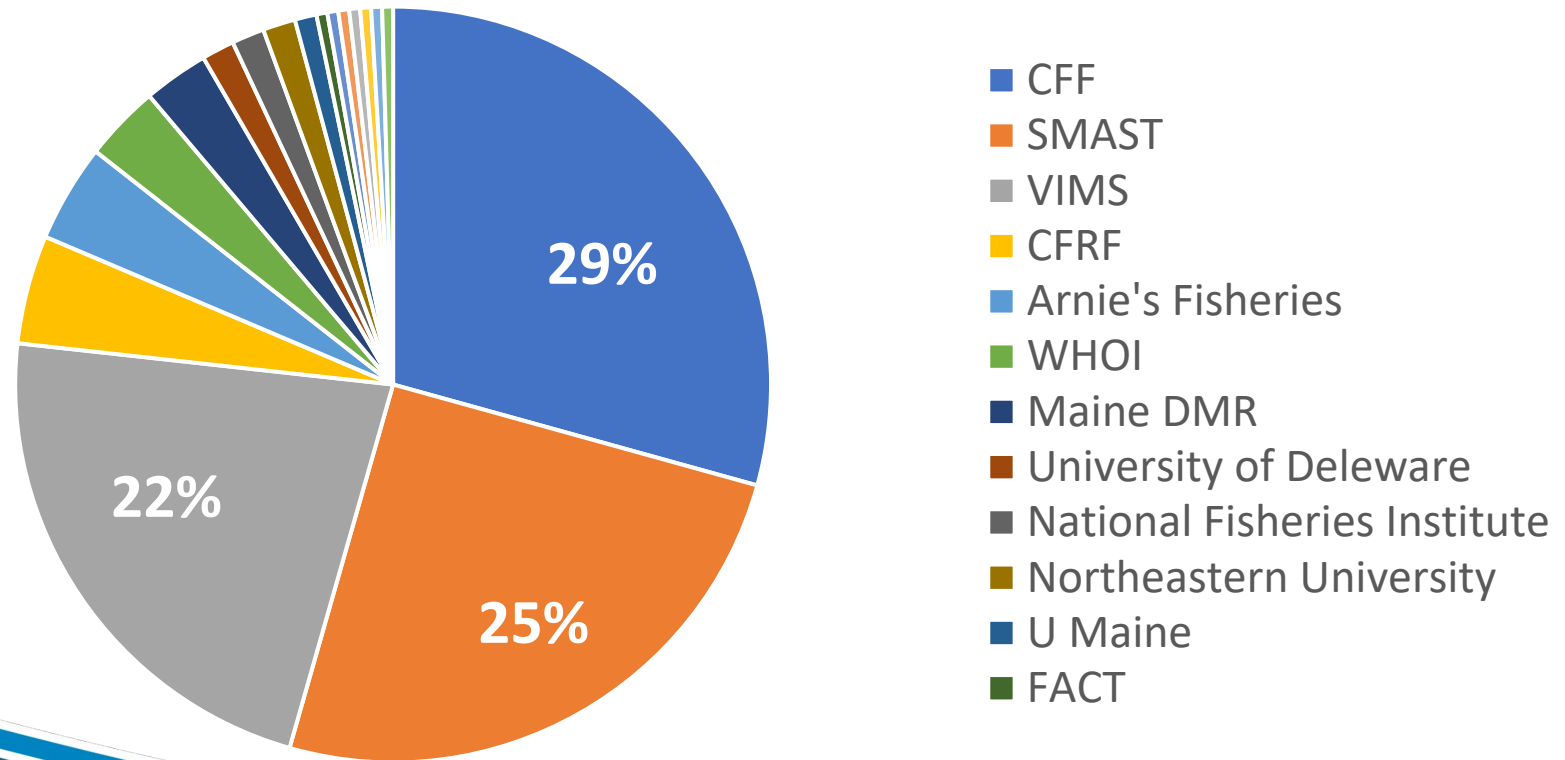
	Number of Projects		Funding	
Survey	90	(42%)	\$113,930,646	(48%)
Bycatch	44	(20%)	\$42,597,130	(18%)
Biology	31	(14%)	\$28,814,273	(12%)
Enhancement	3	(1%)	\$3,065,908	(1%)
Other	47	(22%)	\$43,728,160	(18%)
Grand Total	215		\$237,609,086	



RSA RECIPIENTS: 2010-2025

18 groups received funding through 215 successful proposals.

3 groups have received 77% of RSA pounds



2025 RSA FUNDED PROJECTS

Doc 5 – Scallop Committee
Recommendations for 2027-2028 RSA
Priorities

Research Area	Number of Projects Funded	Estimated Value (Common price * pounds awarded)	Percentage of total funding
Survey	3	\$24,609,180	77.54%
Biology	3	\$3,874,867	12.21%
Wind	1	\$2,780,370	8.76%
Gear	1	\$471,787	1.49%
Grand Total	8	\$31,736,204	100.00%



New England Fishery
Management Council

SCALLOP RSA: GUIDING QUESTIONS

Questions to consider when setting Scallop RSA priorities:

1. If the research is successful, what action will be taken based on the findings (e.g., is there a mechanism to use the results? Is it within the purview of the entity asked to fund the research?), and if so,
2. Is the research likely to be successful, or is the likelihood of success commensurate with the importance of the change it might lead to?

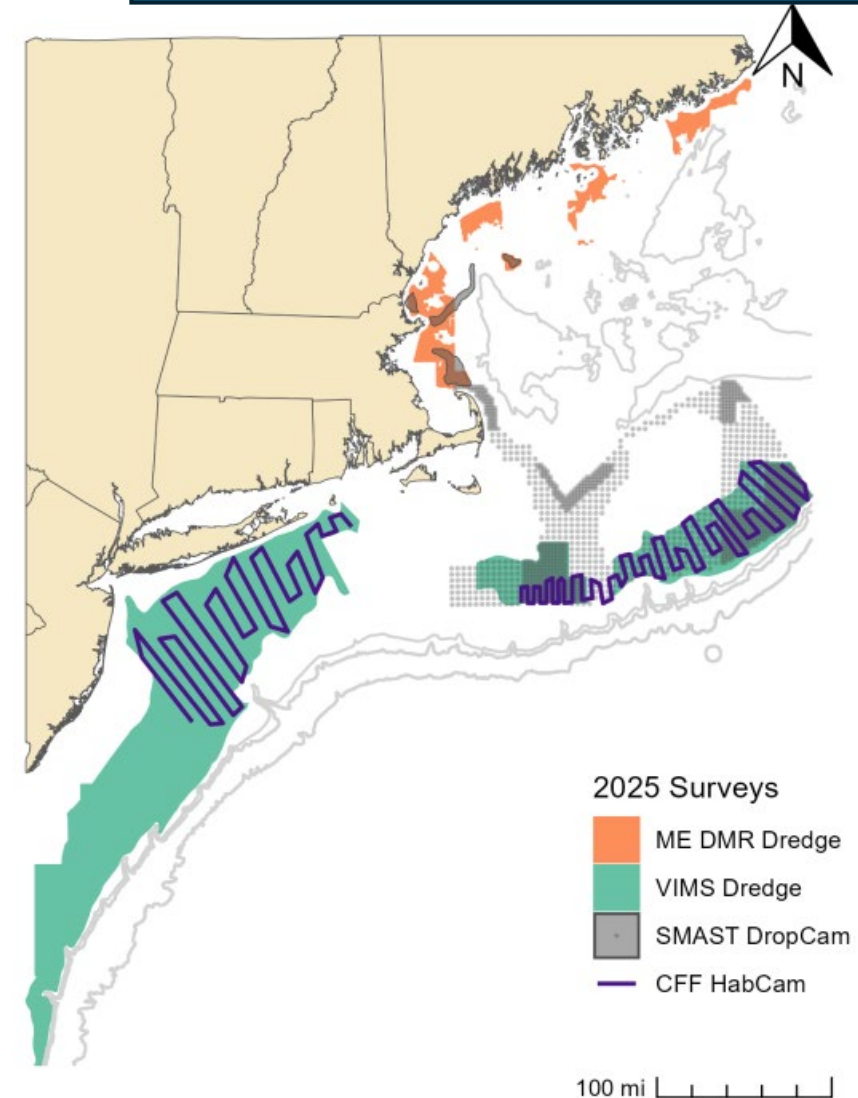
Available pounds are limited – priorities focus on highest management and research needs for upcoming 2-year period



OUTLOOK FOR SURVEY COVERAGE

*Doc 5 – Scallop Committee
Recommendations for 2027-2028 RSA
Priorities*

	2026	2027	2028	2029
Georges Bank				
CFF	X	X		
SMAST	X	X	X	
VIMS	X	X	X	
Mid-Atlantic				
CFF	X	X		
VIMS	X	X	X	
Gulf of Maine				
SMAST	X	X	X	
DMR	X			



New England Fishery
Management Council

CURRENT SCALLOP RSA PRIORITIES, 2025-2026

*Doc 5 – Scallop Committee
Recommendations for 2027-2028 RSA
Priorities*

High Priority: Surveys

1. Surveys of access areas, areas of interest, broadscale

Medium Priority: Non-survey research

2. Scallop Biology
3. Turtle behavior
4. Enhancement
5. Bycatch
6. Commercial fishing behavior
7. Gear: Commercial dredge research
8. High-density areas
9. Offshore wind

General Research Needs

10. Habitat characterization and fishery impacts



SCALLOP COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

*Doc 5 – Scallop Committee
Recommendations for 2027-2028 RSA
Priorities*

High Priority:

- **Scallop Resource Surveys:** Additional language to encourage
 - Establishing a small-scale survey in access areas before start of the fishing year (Strategy 2.3)
 - Increasing sampling effort in access areas at the end of their rotational cycle to reduce projection uncertainty (Strategy 2.4)
 - Increasing sampling effort in areas with known high densities of juvenile scallops



SCALLOP COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

*Doc 5 – Scallop Committee
Recommendations for 2027-2028 RSA
Priorities*

Medium Priorities (not in rank order)

- **Scallop Biology:** No change
- **Bycatch:** Minor changes
- **Commercial Fishing Gear:** Minor changes
- **Fishing In High Density Areas:** Minor changes
- **Scallop Resource Enhancement:** Minor changes in language to focus on identifying areas for scallop enhancement and connecting work to federal waters.



SCALLOP COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

*Doc 5 – Scallop Committee
Recommendations for 2027-2028 RSA
Priorities*

General Research Needs (not in rank order)

- **Habitat Characterization And Fishery Impacts:** Change in priority title
- **Wind:** Deprioritized from Medium Priority, no change in language
- **Turtles:** Deprioritized from Medium Priority, no change in language
 - Scallop PDT had mixed support between removing the priority entirely and deprioritizing to a General Research Need.
 - AP and Committee discussed potential requirement for the Scallop RSA program to fund sea turtle research to satisfy the Biological Opinion (NMFS 2020). GARFO PRD staff confirmed that this was not the case.
 - One Committee motion to recommend that the Council request NOAA Fisheries communicate this change in prioritization to the Office of Protected Resources.



WHY SET SCALLOP RSA PRIORITIES IF THERE ISN'T A 2027 NOFO?

- Scallop RSA priorities set for 2027 & 2028 can guide any necessary modifications to existing awards in 2027 and will be included in the 2028 RSA NOFO.
- If needed, Council can revisit Scallop RSA priorities prior to the 2028 RSA NOFO.

Today's Objective: Approve 2027 & 2028 Scallop RSA priorities.



BACKUP



New England Fishery
Management Council

2026 NGOM SCALLOP FISHERY

- **Season opened April 1 and closed on April 13** after 437,867 lb set-aside was projected to have been harvested by a record 207 active vessels.
- **2325 total trips, an average of 165 trips/day.** 35% of the 449,280 lb harvest was landed by LAGC IFQ vessels, and 36% of landings were to ports other than Gloucester, MA (mainly Provincetown and Boston).
 - Slight overage (< 3%) will trigger accountability measure for FY 2027 season
- **Slowing catch rates on Stellwagen Bank, vessels spread out to Jeffrey's Ledge.** This trend is expected to continue in 2027 due to declining exploitable biomass on the portion of Stellwagen Bank within the NGOM management area.



REGIONAL DAY-AT-SEA ALLOCATIONS

Background

