

OFLs & ABCs for Scallop Framework 40

Connor Buckley, Council Staff

Dr. Dvora Hart, NEFSC



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New England
Fishery Management Council

Presentation Plan

- Connor Buckley – Scallop Plan Coordinator, NEFMC
 - Framework 40 Overview, Management Background, TOR introduction
- Dr. Dvora Hart – Lead Assessment Scientist for Atlantic sea scallops, NEFSC
 - Projection analyses, OFL/ABC methods, 2026 & 2027 OFL/ABC

Framework 40 (FW40)

PDT Recommendation: Scallop ABC control rule applied to combined stock reference points

OFL and ABC – The same control rules developed in A15 and used for FW21-39, with updated survey and fishery data

- OFL - equivalent to the catch associated with F_{MSY} ($F=0.49$)
- ABC control rule – $F_{ABC} = 0.36$, defined as the 75% probability of remaining below the true F_{MSY} . Risk is evaluated in terms the probability of overfishing compared to the fraction loss of yield.

The fishery has not exceeded ABC/ACL under A15 control rule

Stock status: Not overfished and overfishing not occurring

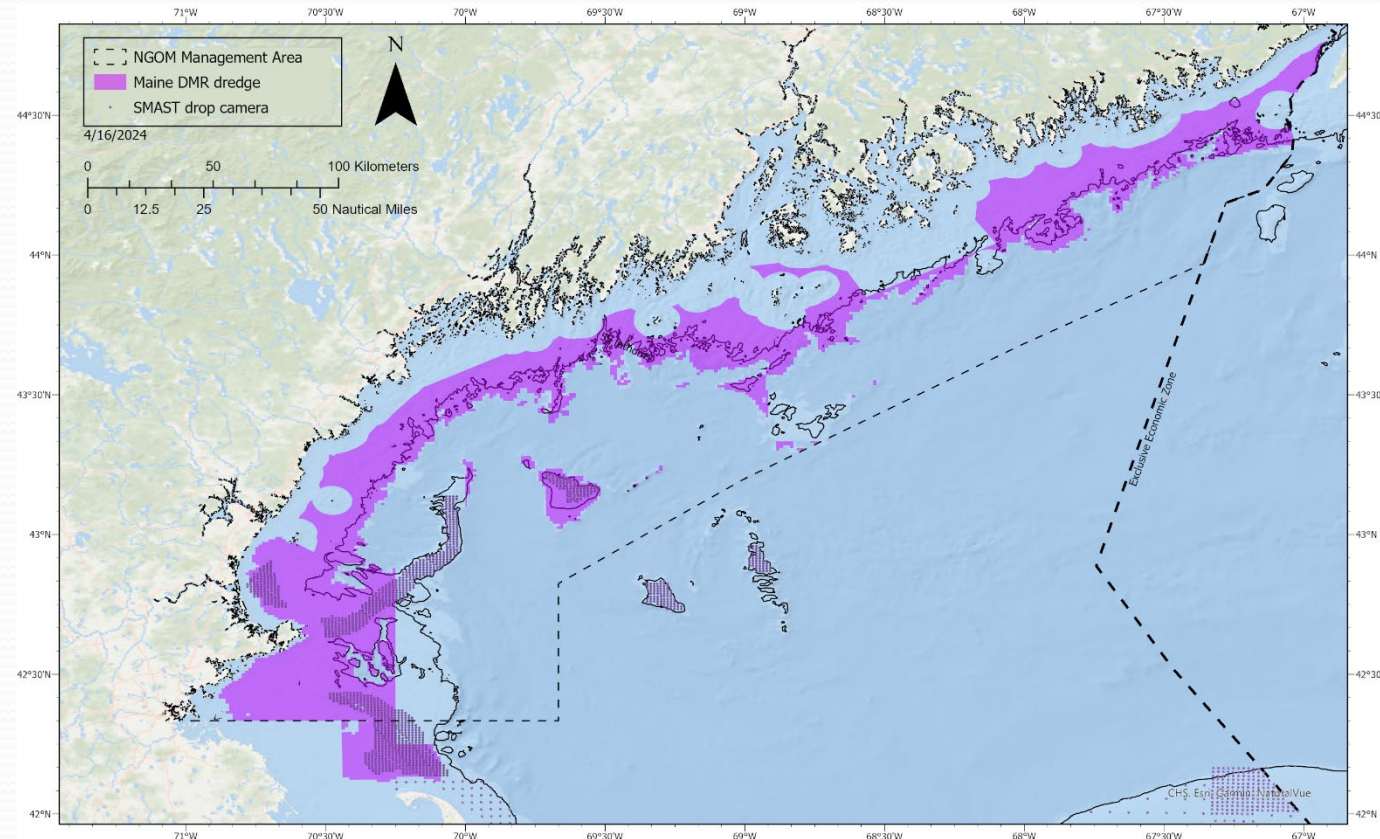
Fishery Specifications for 2026 (FW40)

- No Action – 18 DAS for the Limited Access component, 743,849 lb allocated for LAGC IFQ, 506,672 lb NGOM set-aside.
- Potential limited access area fishing in Area I, or no access area trip allocations.
- Open area DAS options being analyzed between 18 and 36, with Council considering splitting DAS allocations between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic.
- Framework 40 target implementation April 1, 2026.

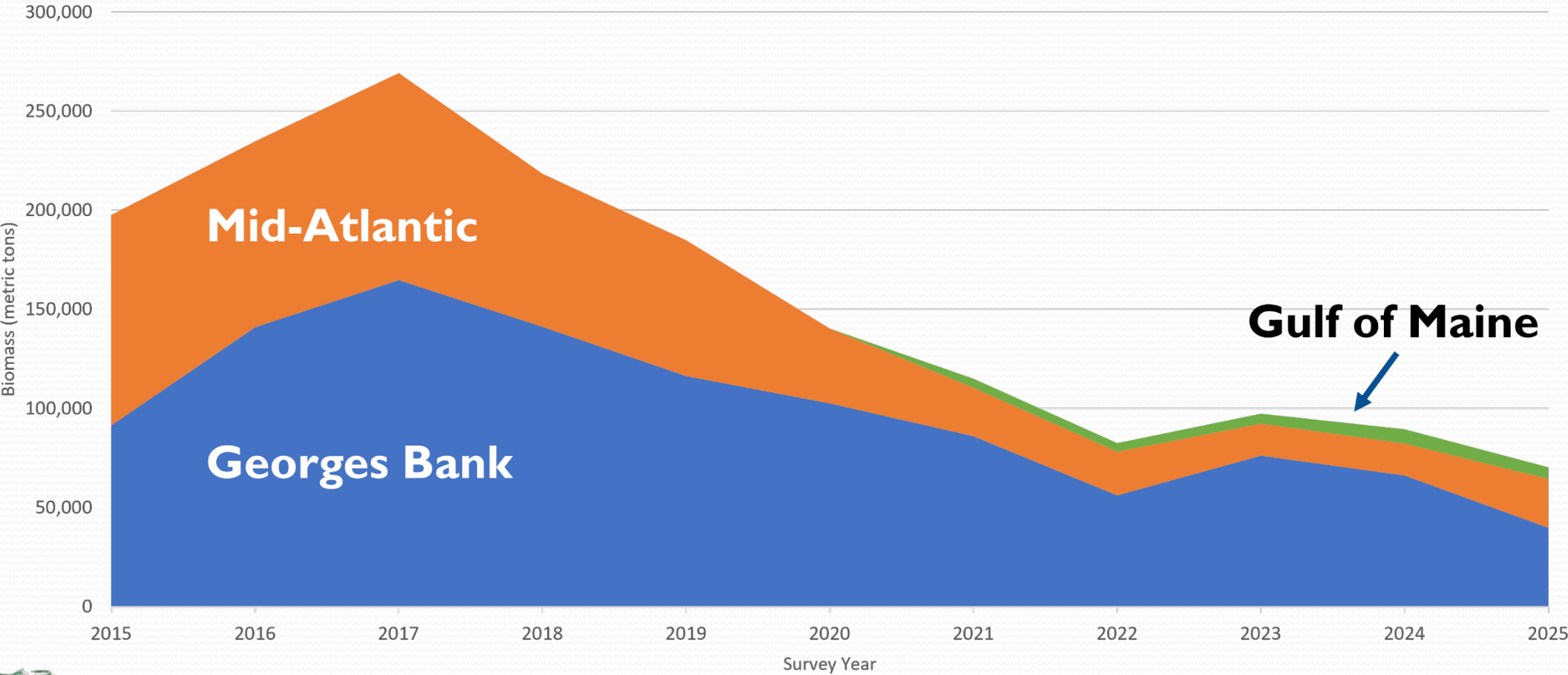
Gulf of Maine

- Survey time series is growing, supported through the RSA.
- Drop camera and dredge coverage in 2025.
- Surveys of the Gulf of Maine include the NGOM management unit, parts of the WGOM Closure, and Stellwagen Bank south of the NGOM.
- No reference points for this region, GB reference points used as proxy.
- Scallop population increased in recent years with a strong cohort in the Stellwagen Bank area but decreased in 2025 outside of the WGOM closure.
- Directed fishery had very high participation in 2025.

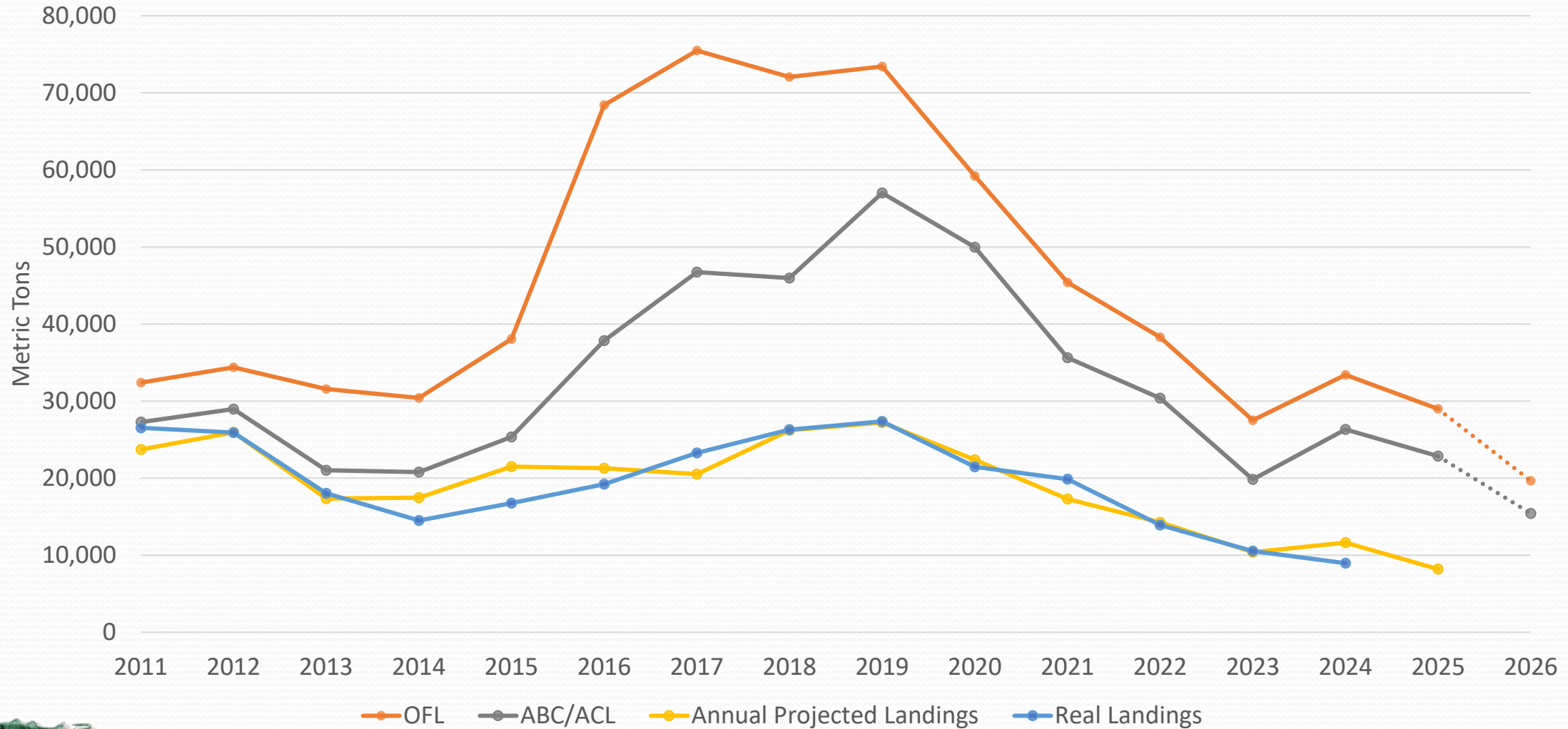
2025 Scallop Survey Coverage in GOM



Georges Bank and Mid-Atlantic Biomass Estimates (2015 – 2025)



Recent OFL & ABC (GB & MA)



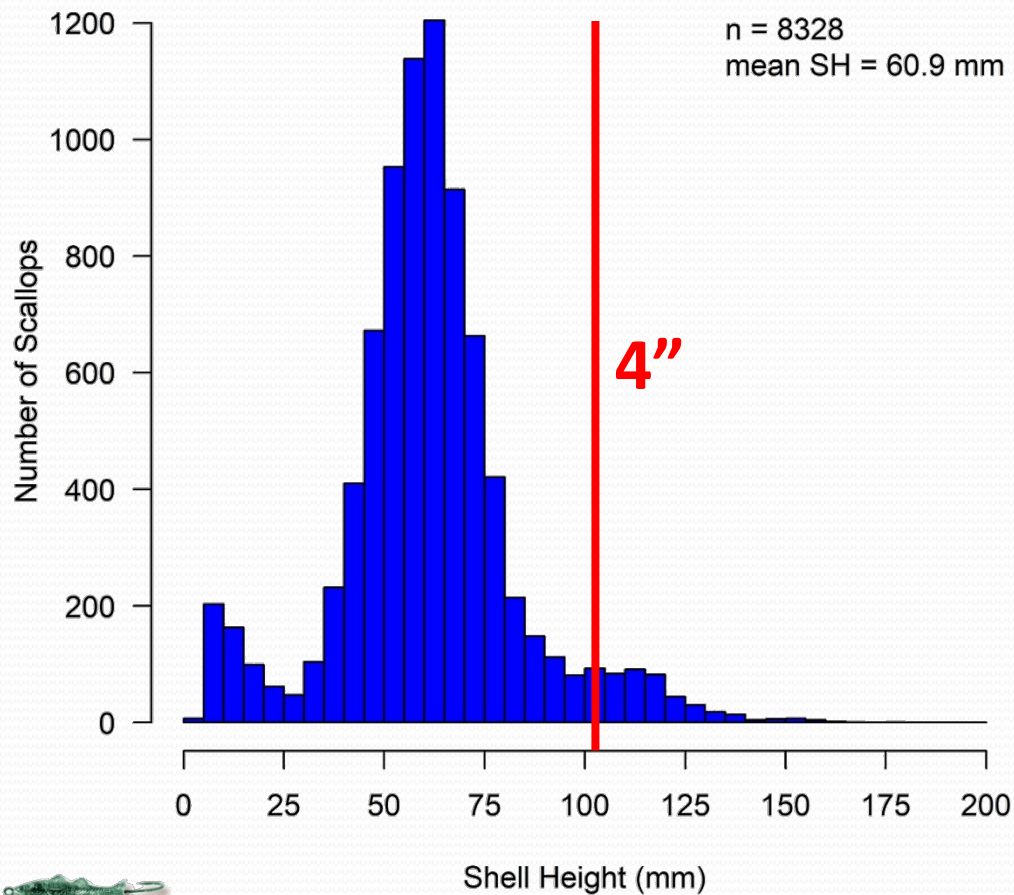
F=0.36 = 15,412 mt

Outlook for the Scallop Resource – 2025 Surveys

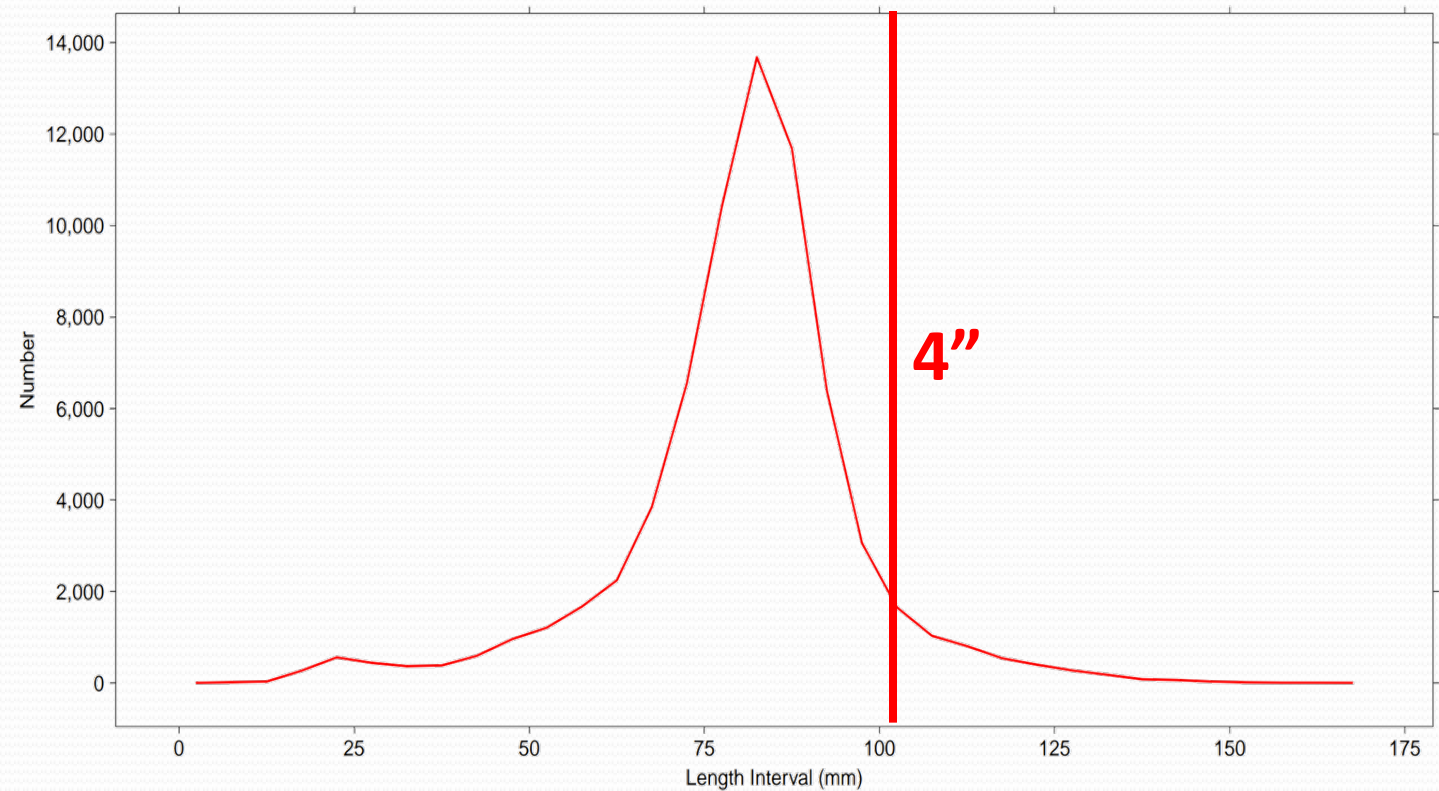
- 54% of the biomass on Georges Bank, 38% in the Mid-Atlantic, 8% in Gulf of Maine
 - Declines in biomass in Area I and Area II regions.
 - Continued growth of large year class in Nantucket Lightship South – 47% of total scallop abundance and 27% of total scallop biomass.
 - Mid-Atlantic biomass increased overall, driven by growth in the Elephant Trunk & Hudson Canyon South, and recruitment in Block Island and Long Island.
- 71% of the scallops are on Georges Bank, 27% in the Mid-Atlantic, 2% in the Gulf of Maine
 - Declines in abundance observed in almost all areas, particularly in Closed Area II – North (HAPC) and Closed Area I – North (Sliver)
 - No strong recruitment observed. Moderate recruitment noted in the Southern Flank, Northern Flank, Closed Area II-North HAPC, Nantucket Lightship South, Block Island, and Long Island.
 - Majority of animals on Georges Bank and Mid-Atlantic are 3 years old and will largely be unavailable to the fishery before 2027.

Size-Distribution of the Scallop Resource

Georges Bank all (SMAST 2025)



Mid-Atlantic all (VIMS 2025)



SSC Action on FW40 - TORS

- A. Consider information provided by the Scallop PDT on survey data and methods to develop fishing mortality reference points and targets based on the 2025 research track assessments and recommendations of the SSC made in August 2025. Provide the Council with a recommendation as to whether these methods are appropriate.
- B. Review assumptions used in the Scallop Area Management Simulation (SAMS) model to project biomass, including natural mortality assumptions. Provide the Council with a recommendation as to whether these methods are appropriate.
- C. Recommend OFLs and ABCs for Atlantic sea scallops for FY 2026 and 2027 (default) that will prevent overfishing, are consistent with the Council's scallop ABC control rule, and consider the Council's Risk Policy Statement.

SSC Recommendations from August 19

1. OFL and ABC using Scallop ABC Control Rule

- $F_{OFL}=0.49$ and $F_{ABC}=0.36$

2. OFL and ABC using Georges Bank reference points

- $F_{OFL}=0.36$ and $F_{ABC}=0.29$

3. OFL and ABC using modified p^*

- $F_{OFL}=0.49$ and $F_{ABC}=F_{20\% \text{ probability of overfishing}}$

Scallop PDT considered Option 1 and Option 2, forgoing Option 3 due to time-constraints

- Currently, Scallop fishery regulations do not permit deviating from the Scallop ABC control rule.
- Based on NOAA Fisheries input, Options 2 and 3 would require modifying the Scallop ABC control rule in Framework 40 to allow for this.

Term of Reference A

The Scallop PDT recommends:

- Adjustments to **Shell-Height Meat-Weight (SHMW)** relationships from those developed through the 2025 Research Track Assessment for both Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, as well as a separate equation for the SHMW relationship in the NLS-South
- An **alternative method for combining survey estimates** in the Southern Flank to account for extreme spatial heterogeneity.

Term of Reference B

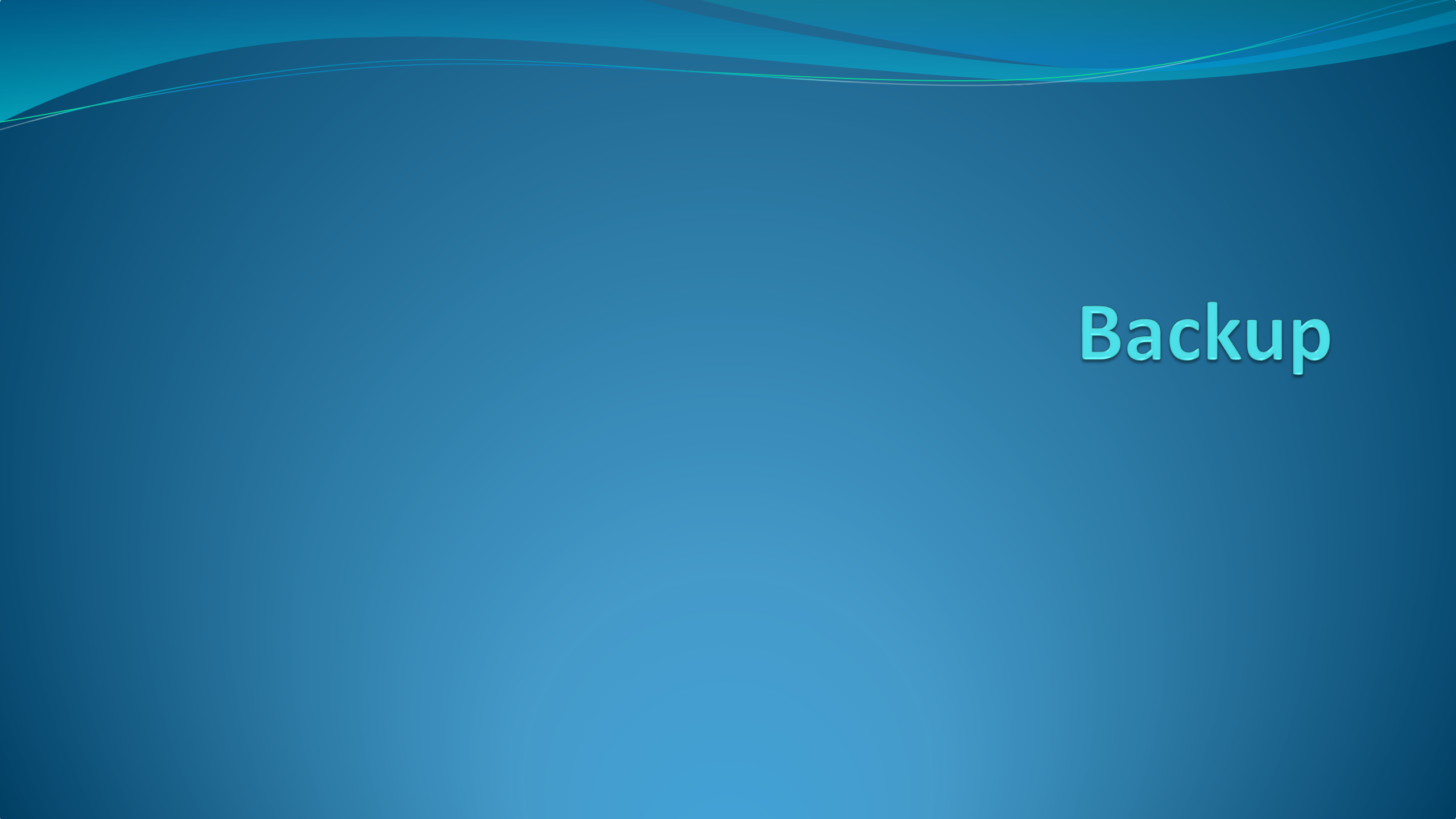
The Scallop PDT recommends:

- **Adjustments to the natural mortality estimates** developed through the 2025 research track assessment to account for spatial variation in the Mid-Atlantic
- **Adjustment to growth for the Nantucket Lightship – South.** Growth in other areas remains unchanged from the 2020 Management Track Assessment.

Term of Reference C

The Scallop PDT recommends:

Option	Reference Points	Year	OFL (mt)	ABC (mt)
Option 1 – Apply current Scallop ABC control applied to combined stock reference points (PDT Recommended)	$F_{OFL}=0.49$ $F_{ABC}=0.36$	2026	19645	15412
		2027	21741	17060
Option 2 – Apply current Scallop ABC control to Georges Bank regional reference points (Deviation from ABC Control Rule)	$F_{OFL}=0.36$ $F_{ABC}=0.29$	2026	15599	13016
		2027	17709	14786



Backup

2026 OFL and ABC recommendation

	2025	2026	2027
Biomass	103,751	86,115	96,816
OFL	28,970	19,645	21,741
ABC	22,840	15,412	17,060