



New England Fishery Management Council

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Rick Bellavance, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

July 2, 2025

Mr. Michael Pentony
GARFO Regional Administrator
NMFS/NOAA Fisheries
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Mike:

With the unfortunate loss of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) HabCam, the 2025 scallop resource surveys are left with a substantial reduction in optical survey coverage that may result in increased uncertainty in estimates of scallop biomass, abundance, and density.

The Council requests that GARFO explore opportunities to collaborate with drop camera and HabCam RSA survey partners to determine if utilizing available 2025 Scallop Research Set-Aside funds could expand survey coverage and help fill this critical data gap. Any additional survey efforts should prioritize optical survey tools to ensure redundant survey coverage using different sampling technologies (i.e., optical and dredge) to provide multiple independent estimates of abundance, biomass, and density in key areas of the scallop resource, as recommended by the Scallop Survey Working Group.

Additional survey efforts should prioritize 1) areas of the scallop resource where there currently is no optical survey coverage, or only one other optical survey, and 2) areas of the scallop resource with known high densities of juvenile scallops or of otherwise high management importance (e.g. current rotational areas). Given these criteria, the highest priority areas to conduct optical surveys include the Elephant Trunk and Hudson Canyon South. The medium priority areas include the Closed Area II-North Habitat Closure, Area I, and Great South Channel. If additional survey coverage needs to be limited in scope to accomplish surveying in the above areas, coverage of the southern extent of the resource, such as Delmarva, could be considered the lowest priority.

My staff are committed to working with GARFO and NEFSC staff to support the coordination and successful completion of scallop surveys.

Sincerely,

Cate O'Keefe
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Jon Hare, Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Map 1 - 2025 Scallop RSA-funded survey coverage

