



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Committee

Hybrid; Providence, RI

June 3, 2026

The Scallop Committee (Committee) met in Providence, RI and via webinar on June 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM to 1) Develop recommendations for Scallop Research Set-Aside priorities for 2027/2028 and 2028/2029; 2) Receive an update on the timeline of Framework 42 and provide input on the development of expected measures; 3) Develop recommendations for sequencing Scallop Strategic Plan work items for 2027-2029; 4) Discuss other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Melanie Griffin (Chair), Eric Hansen (Vice-Chair), Togue Brawn, Michelle Duval, Jake Wiscott, Matt Gates, Emily Keiley, Ted Platz, John Pappalardo, Melissa Smith, Renee Zobel; **Council Staff:** Connor Buckley, Chandler Nelson, Jennifer Couture; **Advisory Panel:** Jim Gutowski, Jay Elsner, Peter Hughes.

Approximately 17 members of the public were also in attendance

KEY OUTCOMES:

- **NGOM Sub-Management Areas**, the Committee passed two motions recommending that the PDT develop alternatives for NGOM sub-management areas, including a north/south partition with options for either concurrent or sequential access, and evaluate alternatives for possession limits that include combinations of in-shell and shucked scallops.
- **Regional DAS Allocations**, the Committee made a consensus statement supporting continued development and analysis of region-specific DAS allocations as a potential future management tool. The Committee did not support reducing the current 10-day DAS carryover provision.
- **On Strategic Plan Implementation**, the Committee identified a number of priority work items for inclusion in a work plan for 2027-2029, including in-season management tools, improving the reliability of stock projections, improving fishing practices, and addressing fleet capacity issues.
- **On RSA Priorities**, the Committee made a consensus statement recommending updated RSA priorities for 2027 and 2028, including revisions to survey priorities, inclusion of high-grading research under bycatch, and moving sea turtle and offshore wind research to

general priority categories. The Committee also made a consensus statement recommending that the Council request that NOAA Fisheries communicate the change in the prioritization of sea turtle research to the Office of Protected Resources.

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES:

Council staff opened the meeting with brief updates. Staff reported on the International Pectinid Workshop, which was held in New Bedford and brought together scallop experts from around the world to share information on scallop biology, ecology, and management. Staff also highlighted the successful Scallop Research Share Day held on May 12, 2026, which featured ten presentations and drew approximately 60 participants both in person and online. Presentations covered a range of topics, including scallop biology, gear research, surveys, industry-collected data, and co-management efforts. Staff also summarized discussions from the recently reconstituted Enforcement Committee, noting that a portion of the meeting focused on enforcement trends and challenges in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) scallop fishery.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #2: FY2026 FISHERY PERFORMANCE

Council staff reviewed preliminary fishery performance information for FY2026 and provided a brief update on the conclusion of FY2025. Staff reported that FY2025 ended with approximately 18 million pounds landed and that an unexpected storm event moved scallops from the Western Gulf of Maine closure into adjacent open fishing areas, resulting in approximately one million additional pounds of landings. Staff reported that catch rates and Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) have remained strong into FY2026, particularly in portions of the Mid-Atlantic. While catch rates have been higher than expected, staff indicated that exceeding the fishery Annual Catch Limit (ACL) currently appears unlikely as fishing effort expands into additional areas of the resource.

Staff also summarized preliminary survey observations. Survey groups reported continued growth and high densities in Nantucket Lightship South, strong biomass and yields in portions of the Mid-Atlantic, declining biomass on Stellwagen Bank, and healthy biomass on Jeffreys Ledge. Survey observations also identified seed scallops in portions of Area II and low levels of shell blister and nematodes in the Mid-Atlantic. Survey groups observed relatively few cut shells despite substantial fishing activity in portions of the Mid-Atlantic fishery.

For the NGOM, the fishery opened on April 1 and closed on April 13 after the projected harvest of the 437,867-pound set-aside. A record 207 vessels participated in the fishery, completing 2,325 trips. Approximately 35% of landings were made by LAGC IFQ vessels and that more than one-third of landings were delivered to ports other than Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was explained that a quota overage of less than 3% would trigger a pound-for-pound accountability

measure in 2027 and that catch rates on Stellwagen Bank slowed during the season as vessels expanded effort onto Jeffreys Ledge.

Discussion: A Committee member who participated in the SMAST drop camera survey provided a correction to the survey update presented by Council staff. They reported that large numbers of sea stars were observed throughout the southern flank and hotspot areas surveyed on Georges Bank, while relatively few sea stars were observed in Closed Area II where concentrations of seed were identified.

One Committee member requested information on the number and distribution of permit types participating in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) fishery. Council staff responded that approximately half of 2026 NGOM landings were made by vessels holding NGOM permits, about one-third were landed by LAGC IFQ vessels, and roughly 10% were landed by vessels holding both NGOM and Limited Access permits.

Another Committee member asked about the depth range covered by the Mid-Atlantic survey. Council staff explained that the survey samples across the established depth strata but additional details on the deepest survey tows could be provided at a later date.

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #3: 2026 SCALLOP WORK PRIORITIES

Council staff provided an overview of 2026 Scallop work priorities. Staff included that the recent Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was released later than anticipated, delaying research award decisions. The AP was asked to provide input on several work priority topics, including Council-contracted work to develop a new scallop stock projection method, as well as Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas and region-specific DAS allocations.

Developing new stock projection methods

Council staff reviewed a recently awarded contract to SMAST to develop new stock projection methods for use in setting annual scallop fishery specifications. Staff explained that the project will include a review of the existing SAMS model and relevant literature, development and testing of alternative projection approaches, and creation of a new LPUE model to improve DAS calculations. Staff indicated that the goal is to have a viable new stock projection model available for use in setting fishing year 2028 specifications, while continuing to compare the performance of new approaches against existing SAMS model outputs, survey information, and fishery data.

Discussion: None

Public Comment:

- **Peter Hughes (Atlantic Capes Fisheries):** Asked how delays in the Research Set-Aside (RSA) award process could affect survey data collection and stock projections if project awards were issued later than anticipated. Council staff responded that survey data would still be available by mid-August and that RSA award decisions would be made well before then. It was added that several survey projects receive multi-year funding and therefore would not be expected to experience interruptions in data collection.
- **Ron Smolowitz (Fisheries Survival Fund):** Commented that surveys are conducted while fishing activity is occurring and suggested that projections will remain uncertain without more continuous monitoring of the resource. Council staff agreed that survey timing introduces uncertainty and explained that one objective of the new projection model is to provide additional analytical capacity and flexibility should disruptions occur in the future.
- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund):** Asked about the involvement of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in the development of new projection methods. Council staff responded that Science Center staff are actively involved in the process and are expected to remain closely engaged in the development and application of any new projection model.

Scallop Framework 42

Council staff announced that the Council will be initiating Scallop Framework 42 at the June meeting in Mystic, CT. This framework will address FY2027 and 2028 (default) catch specifications and consider regional allocation of Limited Access Days-at-Sea and sub-management areas in the NGOM.

Discussion: There was a clarifying question on how the proposed transit corridor would function under a NGOM sub-management area approach. Council staff explained that the transit corridor would allow vessels to travel between management areas when one area is closed, enabling vessels from ports such as Provincetown to access northern fishing grounds without having to travel around the closed area.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Asked how scallops in the NGOM were assessed and incorporated into management prior to Amendment 10. He questioned whether optical survey methods adequately reflect the portion of the resource that is accessible to the commercial fishery and suggested that survey estimates may not fully represent commercially harvestable biomass. A Committee member responded that Maine DMR began conducting Gulf of Maine scallop surveys in 2005 and noted that, prior to that time, there were no federal surveys there contributing to biomass estimates

Northern Gulf of Maine Sub-management areas

Council staff reviewed ongoing work to develop NGOM sub-management areas as part of Framework 42. The concept was initially developed during Framework 40 discussions as a potential tool to reduce fishing pressure on Stellwagen Bank and encourage effort on other banks and ledges that contain substantial scallop biomass but generally support lower catch rates. The current NGOM Total Allowable Landings (TAL) is based on total exploitable biomass across the management area and a single fishing mortality target, while realized fishing mortality on Stellwagen may be considerably higher than elsewhere in the NGOM. Potential benefits of sub-management areas discussed by the Plan Development Team (PDT) included reducing vessel crowding on Stellwagen, distributing fishing effort more broadly, and extending the duration of the fishing season. Staff clarified that the PDT had generally favored a system with no more than two sub-management areas and sequential access between areas. Staff added that monitoring and enforcement would be challenging but that NOAA indicated the concept could be supported operationally.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

1. MOTION (SMITH/BRAWN)

Move to task the PDT to develop an alternative for sub-management areas in Northern Gulf of Maine that utilizes a north/south partition at the Cape Ann longitude of 41°15'N (referencing Figure 1 of Document 3a) with sub-options for this alternative that include harvesting the areas either 1) consecutively or 2) concurrently.

Rationale: When specifications are determined for NGOM, typically using exploitable biomass estimates of several survey areas combined, harvest effort is concentrated on Stellwagen Bank, resulting in the removal of legal biomass that exceeds what was determined as the maximum poundage at $F=0.25$. (For example, FY2026, Stellwagen contributed 209K pounds of exploitable biomass, however, the specifications were set at 437K, but the majority of those pounds were removed from Stellwagen, exceeding the $F=0.25$.) Preliminary calculations indicate that harvest on Stellwagen reached an F-rate of 0.38.

Discussion on the motion: A Committee member asked whether concurrent access to multiple sub-management areas would differ substantially from the current fishery. A NOAA Fisheries representative explained that separate vessel monitoring system (VMS) codes could be developed to support monitoring of multiple management areas. However, if areas were open concurrently and vessels were allowed to transit through closed areas, enforcement and monitoring would become more complex. They indicated that the concept could be implemented but would require additional monitoring and enforcement effort. The Committee member expressed support for continued evaluation of both sequential and concurrent access approaches to determine which would best achieve the objective of distributing fishing effort.

Another Committee member asked how managers would determine when a second area would open under a sequential access approach. Council staff acknowledged that this is an important implementation question and explained that discussions to date have generally assumed the second area would open after the harvest limit in the first area is reached, though alternative approaches such as fixed opening dates could also be considered.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #1 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT WITH ONE ABSTENTION

2. MOTION (SMITH/BRAWN)

Move to task the PDT to evaluate alternatives to address modifications in possession limits, including but not limited to combinations of in-shell and shucked meats.

Rationale: Limiting the possession limit of total scallops on vessel could deter high-grading and potentially reduce incidental mortality of un-kept scallops.

Discussion on the motion: The maker of the motion added that this could deter vessels moving scallops from one management area to another or from state to federal waters.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #2 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT WITH ONE ABSTENTION

Regional Day-At-Sea Allocations

Council staff reviewed potential approaches for allocating DAS separately between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank regions as a future management tool. The concept originated from the Long-term Strategic Plan and is intended to reduce the risk of regional overfishing when large differences in LPUE result in disproportionate fishing effort in one region. Since 2021, much of the fleet's effort has been concentrated on Georges Bank, and the 2025 stock assessment concluded that overfishing occurred on Georges Bank in 2023. The Scallop PDT recognized potential benefits of regional management but cautioned that additional management complexity could create challenges for administration, monitoring, enforcement, and fleet flexibility. 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.

Two concepts were proposed to address this:

1. Vessels are allocated Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank DAS, delineated by the 71W boundary line.
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.

Regarding carryover, Council Staff requested feedback on how to address it for the period between FY2026 and FY2027. Three concepts were proposed for discussion:

1. Not allow any DAS carryover
2. Reduce DAS carryover from 10 DAS to 5 DAS
3. Split up DAS carryover between regions by the same proportion as FY 2027 DAS allocation.

Discussion: The Committee Chair noted that the Advisory Panel generally did not support differential DAS counting because it was viewed as overly complex. One Committee member asked how in-season management measures would be implemented and whether they would require additional Council action. It was explained that the Council is exploring mechanisms that would establish predefined triggers and responses to allow more timely management action. Council staff added that any such system would require development of specific criteria, triggers, and management responses through a framework action and may require regulatory changes if more rapid implementation is desired.

One Committee member questioned how regional DAS allocations could be used to address concerns about localized overfishing and asked whether fishing effort could be controlled through area-specific triggers. Council staff explained that regional DAS allocations would not necessarily require area closures and noted that previous discussions of in-season management have focused on tools such as access area closures, recruitment indicators, and LPUE-based triggers.

Several Committee members supported continued analysis of regional DAS allocations but expressed reservations about allocating region-specific DAS through Framework 42. Some Committee members suggested that additional work should occur before any implementation decision, particularly with respect to DAS trading. Council staff added a clarification that, if the Council ultimately wishes to have regional DAS allocations available as a management tool in fishing year 2028, it may be beneficial to begin developing the necessary regulatory framework in advance. Several Committee members supported continued analysis by the PDT of the concept while delaying implementation until the necessary administrative and trading mechanisms are available. Several Committee members also expressed support for maintaining the current 10-day DAS carryover provision.

Public Comment:

- **Brady Lybarger (LAGC IFQ Scallop Fisherman, Cape May, NJ):** Supported continued development of regional DAS allocations and encouraged the Committee to continue refining the concept over time so that it is available if future fishery conditions warrant its use.
- **John Quinn:** Urged caution and noted that regional DAS allocations, differential DAS counting, and DAS carryover are separate issues that should be considered independently.
- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund):** Supported continued development of regional DAS allocations as a management tool, commenting that it may be beneficial to have the option available even if it is not immediately needed.

- **Magnar Kvilhaug (LA Vessel Owner, New Bedford, MA):** Supported maintaining the current DAS carryover provision. He argued that vessels carrying over DAS is often a result of operational realities and economic conditions rather than poor management decisions, and stated that a five-day carryover would not provide meaningful flexibility for many Limited Access vessels.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #1

The Scallop Committee supports the continued development of measures to allocate region-specific DAS, and tasks the Scallop PDT with additional analysis. The Scallop Committee does not support reducing the 10 DAS carryover provision.

Discussion: A NOAA Fisheries representative clarified that, if the Council wishes to have region-specific DAS allocations available as a management tool by fishing year 2028, regulatory development would need to begin before implementation is desired. They explained that the intent would be to establish the necessary administrative and regulatory mechanisms, such as VMS coding and DAS exchange capabilities, so that the tool would be available if needed in the future. The Committee Chair confirmed that this approach would require advance Council action to provide sufficient lead time for implementation.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Asked whether the measure could be developed and included in regulations without being immediately implemented.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Asked whether georeferenced catch data are available to support analysis of region-specific DAS allocations. Council staff responded that geolocated catch data are available and can be used to support future analyses. Staff also clarified that developing the regulatory framework for the measure is separate from deciding whether and how to allocate DAS among regions.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #1 CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION

AGENDA ITEM #4: SCALLOP STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Council staff reviewed the development of the Scallop Strategic Plan and the process for creating a three-year roadmap of scallop work priorities. Staff explained that the Strategic Plan was informed by visioning sessions and input from Council members, NOAA Fisheries, Council staff, and industry participants. The plan includes 9 objectives and 29 strategies intended to guide future Council work.

Discussion:

Objective 1: Management Capacity and Responsiveness - The Committee discussed the development of in-season management tools and the role that real-time industry data could play in supporting management decisions. One Committee member suggested that dispersing fishing

effort in high-density fishing areas should be a priority and recommended developing measurable triggers and associated management responses that could be applied when fishing effort becomes concentrated. Other Committee members discussed how real-time industry data could be incorporated into future in-season management tools and suggested that the PDT evaluate how existing data streams could be used to support management decisions. Council staff commented that a more coordinated effort to compile and evaluate available real-time data could help improve understanding of fishery conditions and support future management actions.

Objective 2: Improving the Reliability of Projections - Several Committee members suggested that the existing data sources be inventoried and evaluated for whether the available information meets the standards necessary to support management actions. Committee members also discussed the importance of establishing minimum data standards and ensuring that future data collection efforts are aligned with management needs.

One Committee member suggested incorporating environmental variables into stock assessment and projection work. Council staff explained that the PDT is exploring the use of NOAA ocean forecast products and bottom temperature information to provide additional context for stock projections. Committee members also discussed uncertainty associated with survey timing and suggested that the PDT evaluate the impacts of survey timing on stock projections through future analytical work. It was also suggested that this topic could be considered through future RSA priorities.

Another Committee member suggested that implementation of the Northern Gulf of Maine control date should remain a priority.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Emphasized the importance of information verification and suggested that management actions should be supported by reliable and well-vetted data. He also expressed support for establishing a working group focused on scallop enhancement.

Objective 3: Expanding Opportunities in NGOM- There was no Committee discussion on this Objective.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Commented that continued access for Limited Access vessels in the NGOM was an important consideration during development of Amendment 21 and suggested that future management discussions should consider how that access can be maintained.
- **John Quinn:** Noted that substantial work has already been completed on the Northern Edge issue and suggested that previous analyses could be updated and revisited rather than restarted.

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Suggested that the Council pursue an experimental fishery through an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to collect information needed to evaluate future access opportunities in the Northern Edge area. He argued that an experimental fishery could provide information on habitat impacts, interactions with other fisheries, and resource conditions while generating economic value and informing future management decisions. He also suggested that the PDT could help define the terms of such a program.

Objective 4: Improving Rotational Management - There was no Committee discussion on this Objective.

Objective 5: Improving Fishing Practices - One Committee member suggested that the PDT review lessons learned from previous access area management and begin developing proactive strategies for managing fishing activity in Nantucket Lightship South. Another Committee member emphasized the importance of defining high grading and identifying how any future measures could be enforced. Committee members also discussed the role of education and outreach in improving fishing practices and suggested that industry workshops could help fishermen better understand management objectives and best practices.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Commented that concerns regarding high grading remain widespread within the industry and suggested that expanded use of electronic monitoring could help address those concerns.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Opined that incidental mortality, rather than high grading itself, is the primary management concern. He suggested that future work focus on reducing mortality through measures such as limiting time spent in high-density fishing areas and exploring management approaches that use actual fishing time as a control measure.

Objective 6: Maintaining the Economic Viability of the Scallop Fleet – It was suggested that examples from other fisheries could be used to inform future work. Also recommended was the development of a white paper examining potential approaches to addressing capacity concerns. Committee members also suggested that any future review should compare the potential advantages and disadvantages of permit buyback programs and permit stacking.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Commented that excess capacity remains an unresolved issue in the scallop fishery and supported further discussion of potential solutions, including a voluntary permit buyback program.
- **John Quinn:** Suggested exploring whether USDA programs could provide funding opportunities to support future capacity reduction efforts.
- **Paul Weckesser (Scallop Vessel Owner, New Bedford):** Supported continued evaluation of a voluntary permit buyback program and stated that such a program could help address excess capacity while providing an option for participants seeking to leave the fishery.

Objective 7: Maintaining a Dynamic RSA Program - One Committee member suggested that the PDT evaluate the minimum level of RSA funding necessary to maintain long-term survey programs. They clarified that the intent of this suggestion was not to recommend reduced RSA allocations.

Objective 8: Resource Enhancement - The Committee Chair stated that additional research, technical work, and policy development are likely needed before management action is considered and suggested that the issue may be better suited for Council discussion in future years. The Committee also discussed information currently collected through survey programs and whether existing datasets may contain information on sea star abundance that could inform future enhancement discussions.

Objective 9: Improving Industry Engagement - Committee members highlighted the value of outreach events and informal discussions with fishermen and suggested that unstructured opportunities for engagement can encourage more productive conversations than formal meetings alone. One Committee member also pointed to recent listening sessions conducted in another fishery and suggested that similar efforts could help facilitate candid discussions within the scallop fishery.

Public Comment:

- **Todd Bragdon (Scallop vessel owner, Stonington, CT):** Supported renewed outreach efforts prior to the fishing season and suggested informal dockside meetings to discuss upcoming regulations and fishery conditions.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Suggested development of a voluntary certification program that would provide education on fishing practices, management measures, and Council processes while creating incentives for participation.
- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Supported expanded education and outreach opportunities and suggested that incentive-based programs could encourage greater industry participation and engagement.
- **Brady Lybarger:** Supported the concept of a voluntary certification program and suggested it could help transfer knowledge and experience to the next generation of fishermen.

Scallop Research Set-Aside Priorities for 2027 & 2028

Council staff reviewed the proposed Research Set-Aside (RSA) priorities for 2027 and 2028 and requested feedback on the relative priority levels assigned to various research categories.

Discussion: One Committee member expressed concern about establishing priorities for 2028 in advance, noting that future research needs may change. Council staff explained that RSA priorities can be modified before future Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) are issued and that the Council retains the ability to revisit priorities if needed.

On surveys, One Committee member suggested incorporating elements of Strategies 2.3 and 2.4 from the Scallop Strategic Plan into the survey priority language. The Committee also discussed whether annual or multi-year RSA solicitations should be used in the future. Council staff

indicated that annual solicitations remain the most likely approach. One Committee member discussed the potential use of survey information to identify areas with high concentrations of juvenile scallops and suggested that future research could explore how information on juvenile and adult scallop densities may inform management measures.

On bycatch, there was one suggestion to include phrasing on high grading.

On turtles, several Committee members questioned whether sea turtle research should remain a dedicated RSA priority, noting that sea turtle interactions are not unique to the scallop fishery and suggesting that responsibility for this work may be more appropriately addressed through broader NOAA Fisheries research efforts. Committee members supported moving sea turtle research to a general priority category.

On wind, there was support for the PDT's recommendation to move offshore wind research to a general priority category, noting that several ongoing projects and survey efforts are expected to provide additional information in the near future.

Public Comment:

- **Jay Elsner (New Bedford, MA):** Supported expanded seasonal survey work and suggested that surveys conducted throughout the fishing season could improve understanding of resource conditions and the effects of fishing activity over time.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Asked whether moving sea turtle research to a lower priority category would create any conflicts with the Biological Opinion governing the fishery. GARFO staff clarified that the Biological Opinion requires NOAA Fisheries to conduct the research and does not specifically require funding through the Scallop RSA Program.
- **Danielle Palmer (NOAA GARFO, Protected Resources):** Explained that the PDT supports moving sea turtle research to a general priority category and stated that failure to fund sea turtle research through RSA would not place the scallop fishery at risk of closure. She noted that responsibility for the research rests with NOAA Fisheries and that ongoing capacity limitations at the Science Center may affect future research efforts.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #2

The Committee recommends that the Council adopt the following Scallop Research Set-Aside priorities for 2027 and 2028.

High Priority

1. SCALLOP RESOURCE SURVEYS:
 - Establish a small-scale survey of access areas each year to provide additional data on the resource prior to the start of the fishing year on April 1 (Strategy 2.3)
 - Increase survey effort at the end of an access areas rotational cycle to reduce projection uncertainty (Strategy 2.4)

- Interest in surveying areas with high densities of juvenile scallops and how they propagate over time.

Medium Priority:

2. SCALLOP BIOLOGY:

3. COMMERCIAL FISHING GEAR:

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

4. BYCATCH:

- Research could include evaluating the impact of high-grading and fishing behavior on incidental mortality.

5. FISHING IN HIGH DENSITY AREAS:

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

6. SCALLOP RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT:

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

General Priorities:

7. HABITAT CHARACTERIZATION AND FISHERY IMPACT RESEARCH

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

8. TURTLES:

9. WIND:

CONSENSUS STATEMENT CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION

AGENDA ITEM #4: OTHER BUSINESS:

LAGC IFQ Regulatory Changes

The Committee heard a request from Brady Lybarger (LAGC IFQ fishermen, Cape May, NJ) for the Council to consider regulatory changes affecting LAGC IFQ permit holders targeting summer flounder. They requested to retain a small amount of scallops caught as incidental catch without those landings being deducted from the vessel's IFQ allocation. The request argued that the change would reduce waste, help offset operating costs, and avoid the need to lease IFQ quota to cover small incidental scallop landings.

Mr. Lybarger also requested for the Council to consider changes affecting vessels that hold both a federal LAGC IFQ permit and a Massachusetts Coastal Access (CAT) Permit. The request argued that scallops harvested in Massachusetts state waters under a state permit should not be deducted from a vessel's federal IFQ allocation and stated that current requirements can impose substantial quota leasing costs on fishermen operating in state waters.

Discussion: A NOAA Fisheries representative explained that both issues stem from the way permit categories were originally structured. They commented that incidental scallop permits and the LAGC IFQ permit are separate permit categories and that any change allowing IFQ permit holders to land scallops outside of their allocation would represent a fundamental change to the permit system. The Committee Chair added that Massachusetts has permit restrictions intended to limit participation and prevent a large influx of fishing effort into state waters. It was further explained that the original qualification and allocation process for LAGC IFQ permits contemplated fishing activity in state waters and that exempting state-water landings from IFQ accounting would similarly represent a significant change to the structure of the program. It was indicated that either proposal would likely require a substantial Council action, potentially through an amendment, and would need to be considered through the Council's prioritization process.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #3

The Scallop Committee recommends that the Council request that NOAA Fisheries communicate the priority change for protected species research to the NMFS Office of Protected Resources so that turtle research can be funded through that office going forward.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION

With no other business the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30PM