

Enforcement Committee

MAY 14TH 2026



New England Fishery
Management Council

AGENDA

- Introductions, function of new committee, Chair/Vice-Chair nominations – [McCarron]
- Review of NOAA OLE Council enforcement updates– [Gilbert]
- Discussion of this year’s NGOM scallop fishery – [Buckley/Berthiaume]
- Discussion of mesh size enforcement in redfish exemption program – [Frede]
- Discussion of potential gear conflict issues in scallop closed area two – [McCarron]
- Other business, as necessary



COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- New Enforcement Committee
 - At their December meeting, the Council voted unanimously to accept a proposal from the Executive Committee to restructure the Enforcement Committee as a panel of sworn law enforcement officers and officers of the court
 - This committee structure will allow for better input on law enforcement practices in the Northeast and will allow the committee to meet in closed session when the Chair decides that closed discussions would help advise the Council on sensitive law enforcement matters



COMMITTEE BUSINESS - CONTINUED

Introductions

2026 Law Enforcement Committee			Alternate
Chair	TBD		
Vice-Chair	TBD		
	Lieutenant Delayne Brown	New Hampshire Fish & Game	
	SAC James Cassin	NOAA OLE	Officer Jason Berthiaume
	Captain Jack Chapin	Mass Environmental Police	
	Lieutenant Jeff Mercer	Rhode Island DEM	
	Captain John Singletary	US Coast Guard	Lieutenant Tom Bleifuss
	Lieutenant Danny White	Maine Marine Patrol	Major Robert Beal
	Captain Keith Williams	CT Environmental Conservation Police	
GC Advisors			
	Attorney Sam Duggan	NOAA GC - Northeast	
	Attorney Mitch Macdonald	NOAA GC - Northeast	
	Attorney Katherine Pohl	NOAA GC - Enforcement	
	Attorney Scott Sakowski	NOAA GC - Northeast	



COMMITTEE BUSINESS – CONTINUED

- Nomination of a Committee Chair and Vice-Chair (if desired)



FEEDBACK ON NOAA OLE REPORT TO COUNCIL

- NOAA OLE Northeast Compliance Liaison Caleb Gilbert recently asked the NEFMC and the MAFMC for feedback on the content of the quarterly and semi-annual reports that OLE submits to the Councils
- NEFMC staff would also like the Enforcement Committee to review the example materials supplied as PDF files and provide feedback to Mr. Gilbert
- Please see attached quarterly and semi-annual reports from OLE



Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Fishery

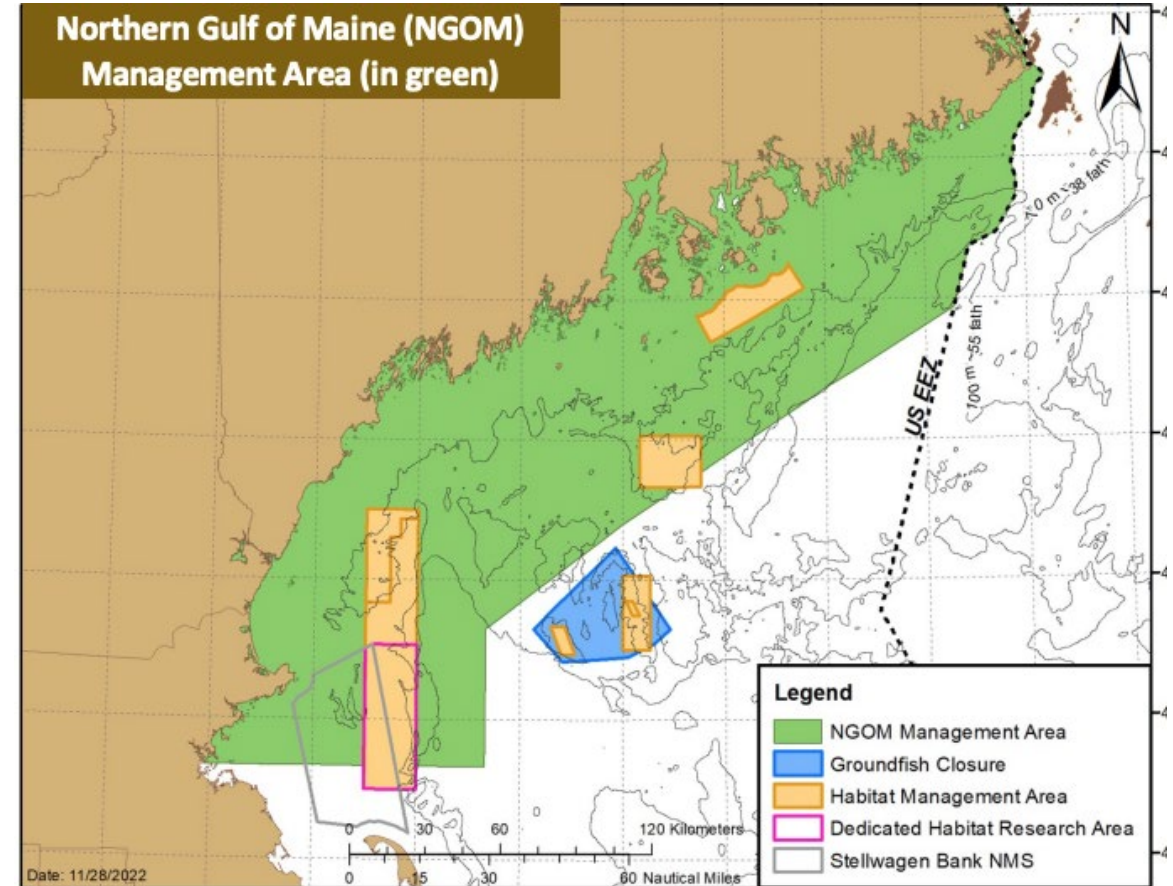
CONNOR BUCKLEY
ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
MAY 14, 2026

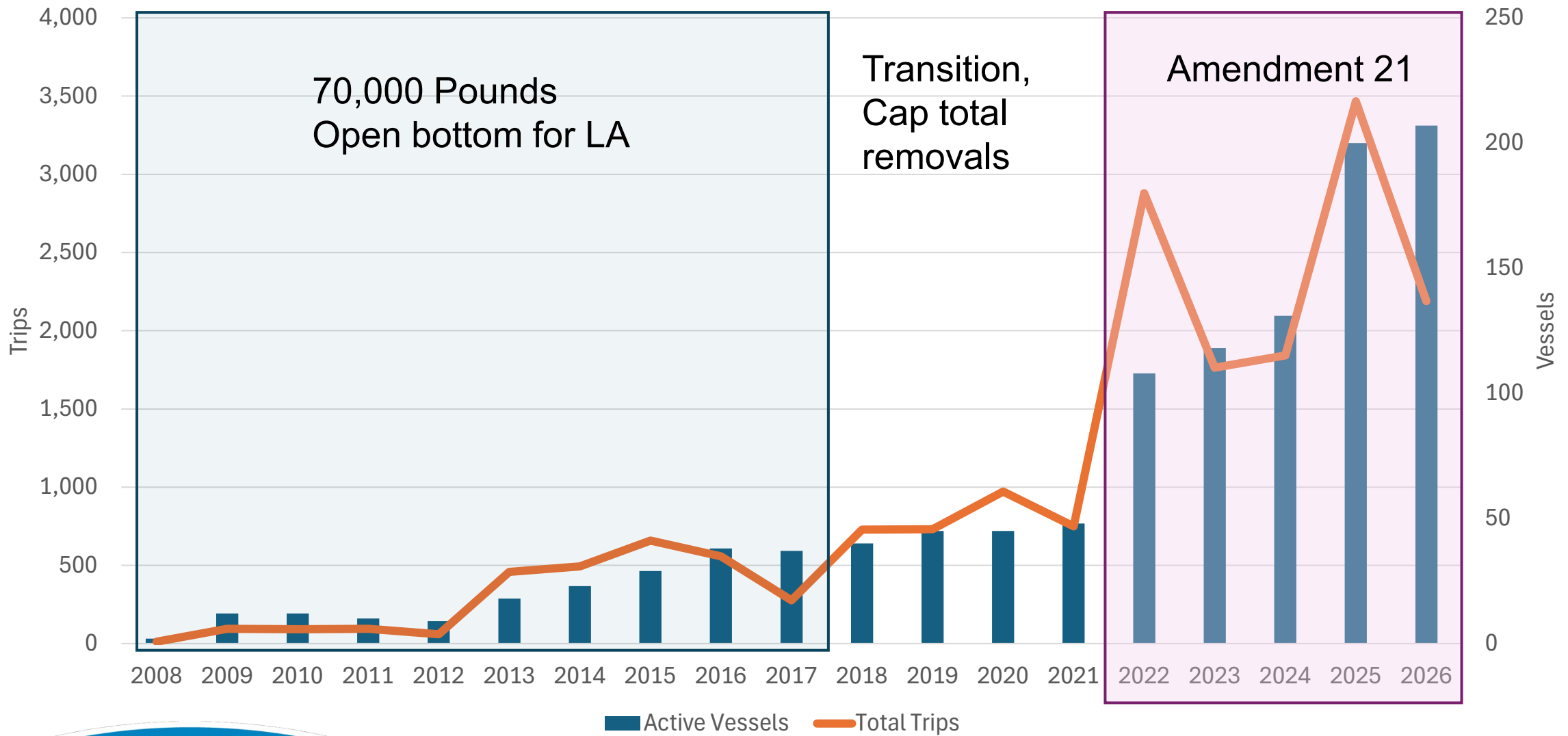


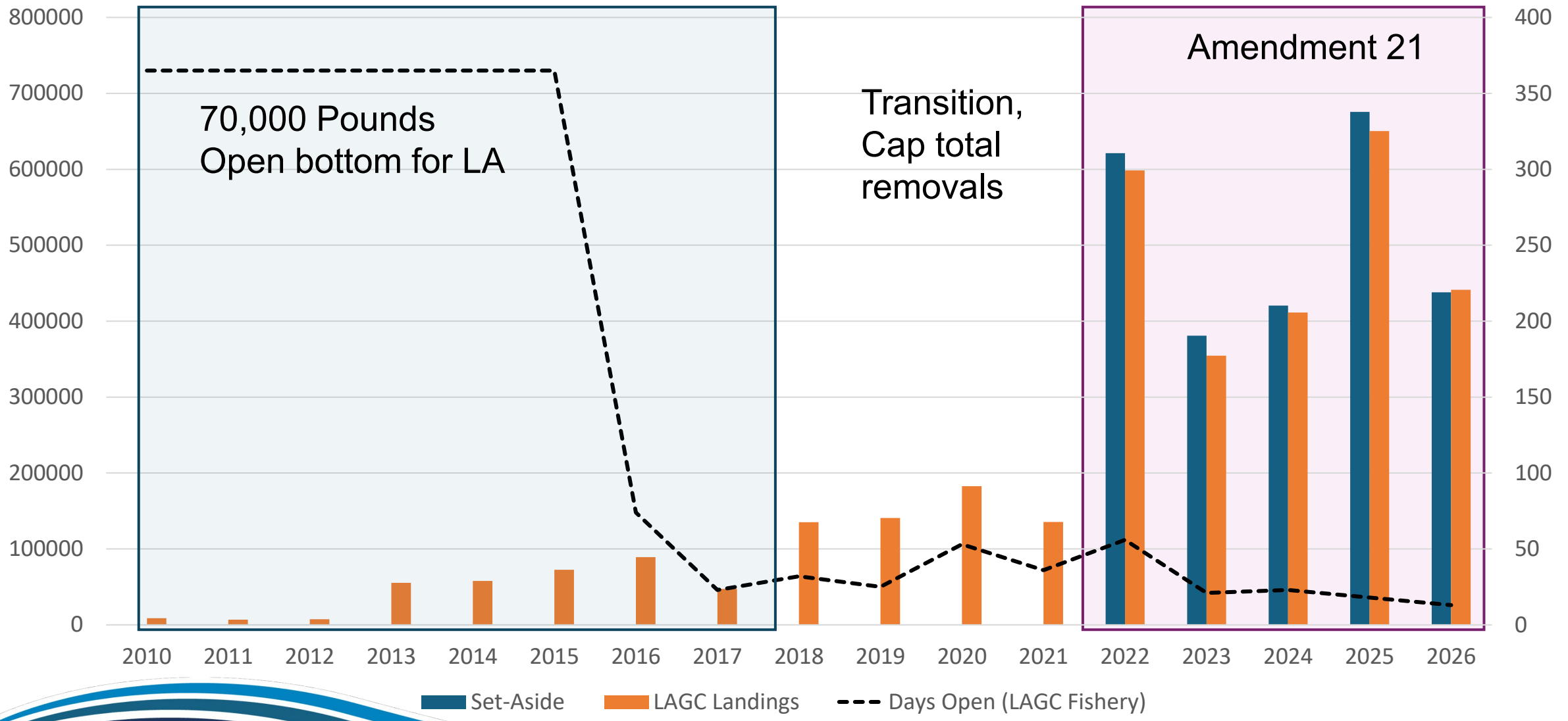
New England Fishery
Management Council

AMENDMENT 11 (FY2022)

1. Support a growing directed scallop fishery in federal waters in the NGOM.
2. Allow for orderly access to the scallop resource in this area by the LAGC and LA components.
3. Establish mechanisms to set allowable catches and accurately monitor catch and bycatch from the NGOM.







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. Participation was record high, leading to record short season.

2325 total trips, an average of 165 trips/day. 35% of the 441,247 lb harvest was landed by LAGC IFQ vessels, and 36% of landings were to ports other than Gloucester, MA.

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.



2026 NGOM LANDINGS BY PORT AND PERMIT TYPE

VTR State	VTR Port	LGC B (MEATS)	LGC B (\$)	LGC A (MEATS)	LGC A (\$)
MA	GLOUCESTER	214,724	6,561,258	69,465	1,949,897
MA	PROVINCETOWN WHARF	7,708	223,067	42,314	960,043
OTHER	OTHER	2,987	65,522	10,804	264,521
MA	SCITUATE (SCITUATE CENTER)	0	0	7,958	237,377
MA	BOSTON	16,499	510,971	6,742	171,723
NO VTR	NO VTR	26,568	850,320	5,669	146,411
MA	NEW BEDFORD	7,197	180,521	7,204	59,856
MA	MARSHFIELD (MARSHFIELD COMPACT)	0	0	4,616	34,715
MA	PLYMOUTH	0	0	1,590	11,511
MA	ROCKPORT	5,679	167,841	0	0
ME	PORTLAND	1,026	33,103	0	0



OTHER includes all VTR Ports where there were <3 vessels



2026 NGOM SCALLOP FISHERY

Crowding – With 207 vessels active in and around Stellwagen Bank, up slightly from 2025, vessel crowding was an issue but mitigated as vessels spread out across the area.

Perceptions of poor fishing practices – Scallopers reported seeing instances of excessively long tows (>1 hour), high-grading, and deck-loading. While not prohibited, this has been a source of contention for active NGOM fishermen.

Other issues – NGOM fishermen have shared frustration at perceived lack of enforcement of trip limits for vessels landing in Provincetown and Boston.



2027 OUTLOOK

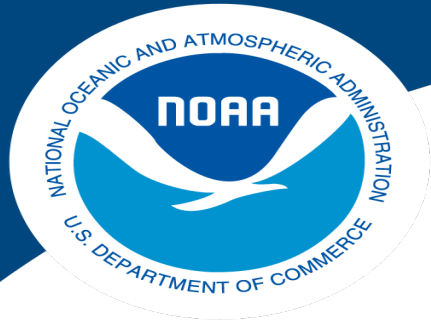
While surveys of the NGOM scallop resource are currently underway, expectation of continued decline in exploitable scallop biomass, particularly on Stellwagen Bank.

- Lower LPUE is expected to lead to decreased effort from LAGC IFQ component and more dispersed fishing effort relative to FY 2025.

NEFMC prioritized development of sub-management areas in the NGOM to allow better control of fishing effort on Stellwagen Bank.

- To be considered in Scallop Framework 42 (FY 2027 implementation)





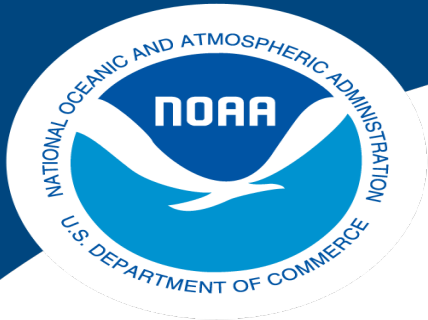
**NOAA
FISHERIES**

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NGOM Operations - 2026

- **Participation**
 - NOAA OLE
 - MEP
 - USCG – NA
- **88 Inspections / 19 Patrols / 35 Contacts**
 - Gloucester – 58
 - Boston – 11
 - P-town/South shore – 17
 - At-sea - 2
- **Contacts**
 - Calls/inquires – 35
 - Email reminder (VTR/VMS) – 542 (All LGC)
 - Compliance reminder (PTNS, Pre-land) – 35
 - Compliance reminder (VMS declaration) - 119

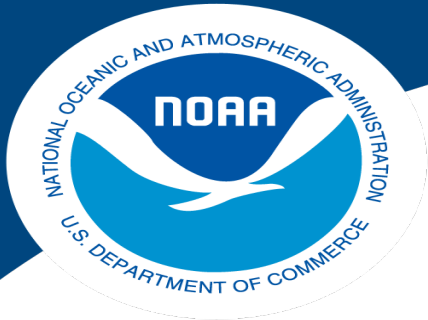


NOAA
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NGOM Operations 2026

- **Violation type**
 - Reporting – 44 (Maintain eVTR, PTNS, VMS)
 - Possession limit – 20 (minimal amounts)
 - Gear – 4
 - Permit – 3 (expired)
 - Admin/other – 3 (Decal / Reg)
 - Closed area – 2 (Prior opening)
 - Dealer - 1
- **Significant violations?**
 - Reporting - eVTR
 - Overages – Couple notable
- **Permit type**
 - 2 Dealer
 - 35 IFQ
 - 51 NGOM



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

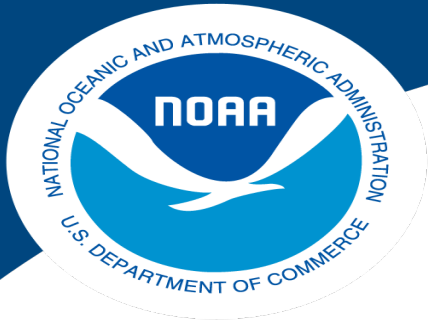
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NGOM Operations 2026

Challenges & Concerns

- Maintain eVTR – Widespread, but not specific to NGOM
- Double trips
 - Creates unsafe derby
 - Velocity of trips is very fast
 - Industry can't come into compliance, high incentive to turn and burn and not correct issues
 - Failure to report on time
 - Enforcement can't keep up
 - Unclear regulations – definition of port/offload/dock
 - Transferring product with skiffs
 - Becoming more problematic as fishery spreads outside of Gloucester

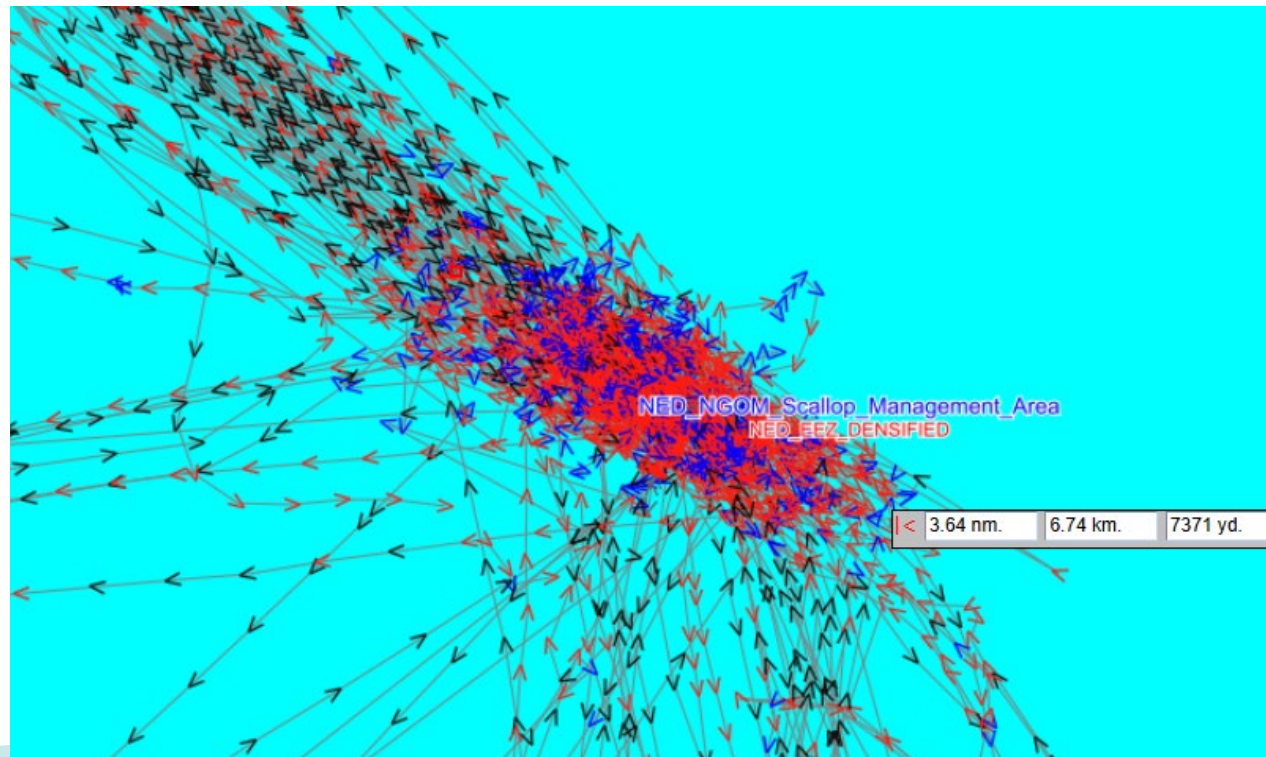


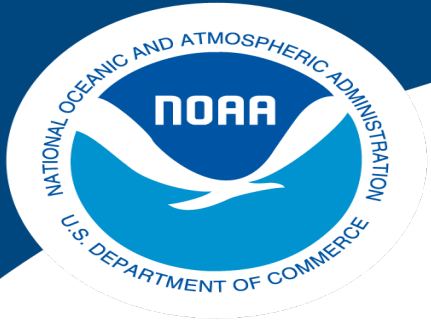
**NOAA
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This information is considered confidential and shall not be disclosed except to authorize personnel under 16. U.S.C. 1881a, Section 402, Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

- **Fishing grounds**
 - 3.5 nm x 1.25 nm
 - Each vessel = 0.15 nm (900 ft)
 - If evenly distributed, vessels would be spaced about 3 football fields apart





NOAA FISHERIES

Office of Law Enforcement



SCALLOP CLOSED AREA TWO

- At their April meeting, the Council heard public comment from a scalloper who would like to participate in the upcoming scallop Closed Area Two opener; however, they were concerned with the proliferation of offshore lobster gear in the area and seeking guidance on avoiding gear conflict.
 - Staff has advised vessel owner(s) to reach out to offshore lobstermen's association to see if a compromise can be worked out.



REDFISH EXEMPTION PROGRAM – MESH SIZE ENFORCEMENT



REDFISH SECTOR EXEMPTION - MESH SIZE ENFORCEMENT

- Public comments raised concerns about enforcement of mesh size regulations during discussions on the Council's review of the redfish sector exemption, including:
 - Inconsistencies in mesh size configuration across different sections of net (codend, body, and extension)
 - Enforcement of mesh size requirements in exemption program – how often nets are checked (codend and extension), enforcement challenges
- Groundfish Advisory Panel Discussion – June 10, 2025:

The Groundfish Advisors in the meeting expressed interest for the Groundfish Committee to request the Enforcement Committee hold a meeting to discuss enforcement of mesh size regulations.



REDFISH SECTOR EXEMPTION - MESH SIZE REQUIREMENTS

50 CFR 648.85(e)(1)(vii)

Gear requirements. Vessels may only use trawl gear when declared into and fishing in the Redfish Exemption Program. Vessels may fish in the Redfish Exemption Program with any trawl gear, including, but not limited to, otter trawl, haddock separator trawl, flounder trawl, or Ruhle trawl.

(A) Minimum codend mesh size. The minimum codend mesh size for vessels fishing in the Redfish Exemption Program is 5.5-inch square or diamond mesh. All other trawl net restrictions listed in § 648.80(a)(3)(i) and (a)(4)(i), including minimum mesh sizes for the net body and extensions, still apply.



REDFISH SECTOR EXEMPTION - MESH SIZE REQUIREMENTS

50 CFR 648.85(e)(1)(vii)

(B) Gear stowage. Codends with mesh smaller than otherwise permitted by regulation at § 648.80(a)(3)(i) and (a)(4)(i), or § 648.87(c)(2)(ii)(D), must be stowed during transit to and from the Redfish Exemption Area, and when not in use under the Redfish Exemption Program. Any non-trawl fishing gear must be stowed for the duration of any trip for which a vessel declared its intent to fish under the Redfish Exemption Program consistent with paragraph (e)(1)(iv) of this section. Stowed gear must be not available for immediate use consistent with definitions in § 648.2



GROUNDFISH MESH REGULATIONS

50 CFR 648.80(a)(3)

GOM Regulated Mesh Area minimum mesh size and gear restrictions —

(i) ***Vessels using trawls.*** Except as provided in paragraphs (a)(3)(i) and (vi) of this section and § 648.85(b)(6), and unless otherwise restricted under paragraph (a)(3)(iii) of this section, the minimum mesh size for any trawl net, except a midwater trawl, on a vessel or used by a vessel fishing under the NE multispecies DAS program or on a sector trip in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area is 6-inch (15.2-cm) diamond mesh or 6.5-inch (16.5-cm) square mesh, applied throughout the body and extension of the net, or any combination thereof, and 6.5-inch (16.5-cm) diamond mesh or square mesh applied to the codend of the net as defined in paragraphs (a)(3)(i)(A) and (B) of this section, provided the vessel complies with the requirements of paragraph (a)(3)(vii) of this section.



GROUNDFISH MESH REGULATIONS

(A) For vessels greater than 45 ft (13.7 m) in length overall, a diamond mesh codend is defined as the first 50 meshes counting from the terminus of the net, and a square mesh codend is defined as the first 100 bars counting from the terminus of the net.

(B) For vessels 45 ft (13.7 m) or less in length overall, a diamond mesh codend is defined as the first 25 meshes counting from the terminus of the net, and a square mesh codend is defined as the first 50 bars counting from the terminus of the net.



GROUNDFISH MESH REGULATIONS

50 CFR 648.80(a)(4)

GB regulated mesh area minimum mesh size and gear restrictions —

(i) ***Vessels using trawls.*** Except as provided in [paragraph \(a\)\(3\)\(vi\)](#) of this section, this [paragraph \(a\)\(4\)\(i\)](#), [§ 648.85\(b\)\(6\)](#) and [\(8\)](#), and [§ 648.87\(c\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#), and unless otherwise restricted under [paragraph \(a\)\(4\)\(iii\)](#) of this section, the minimum mesh size for any trawl net, except a midwater trawl, and the minimum mesh size for any trawl net when fishing in that portion of the GB Regulated Mesh Area that lies within the SNE Exemption Area, as described in [paragraph \(b\)\(10\)](#) of this section, that is not stowed and available for immediate use as defined in [§ 648.2](#), on a vessel or used by a vessel fishing under the NE multispecies DAS program or on a sector trip in the GB Regulated Mesh Area is 6-inch (15.2-cm) diamond mesh or 6.5-inch (16.5-cm) square mesh applied throughout the body and extension of the net, or any combination thereof, and 6.5-inch (16.5-cm) diamond mesh or square mesh applied to the codend of the net as defined in [paragraph \(a\)\(3\)\(i\)](#) of this section, provided the vessel complies with the requirements of [paragraphs \(a\)\(3\)\(vii\)](#) of this section.



GROUNDFISH MESH REGULATIONS

50 CFR 648.87(c)(2)(ii)(D)

The minimum codend mesh size restrictions for trawl gear specified in § 648.80(a)(4)(i) when using a haddock separator trawl defined in § 648.85(a)(3)(iii) or the Ruhle trawl defined in § 648.85(b)(6)(iv)(J)(3) within the GB RMA, as defined in § 648.80(a)(2), provided sector vessels use a codend with 6-inch (15.2-cm) minimum mesh



Other Business?



New England Fishery
Management Council