New England Fishery Management Council
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Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Plan Development Team

November 5, 2026
Webinar

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) met on November 5, 2026, via webinar at 12:00 PM to 1) review and discuss projection results, including projected economic impacts, and develop recommendations for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default) specifications, 2) review Framework 42 work to date, and 3) other business.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Jenny Couture (NEFMC), Dr. Adam Delargy (SMAST), Bill DuPaul (College of William & Mary), Dvora Hart (NEFSC), Carl Huntsberger (ME DMR), Emily Keiley (GARFO), Bobby Murphy (NEFSC), Tasha O'Hara (CFF), Chris Parkins (RI DEM), Sally Roman (VIMS), and Kelly Whitmore (MA DMF). Scallop Committee: Chair Melanie Griffin, Kirby Aarsheim, Eric Hansen, and Melissa Smith. Approximately 11 members of the public attended.

AGENDA ITEM #1: SCALLOP PROJECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY 2027 – FY 2028 (DEFAULT) SPECIFICATIONS

Council staff began by presenting a brief overview of work to date on the ongoing specifications action for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default). After Dr. Hart's presentation, staff presented information on the resulting specifications for various projection scenarios, including projected size frequencies, projected landings, sensitivity run results, and the economic impacts of the annual projected landings, Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) set-aside, and Limited Access General Category (LAGC) allocations. Sally Roman presented data on the 2018-2019 sampling cruise data with seasonal bottom water temperature and meat weight to help inform the seasonal closure discussion on the potential Nantucket Lightship Access Area. The PDT was asked to provide their recommendations on the overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch, the fishery specifications for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default), any seasonal closure of a potential Nantucket Lightship (NLS) Access Area, and NGOM total allowable landings.

Dr. Dvora Hart also provided a brief presentation on the new projection model runs, as requested by the Scallop Committee, specifically 42 DAS scenario, increased incidental fishing mortality in the NLS South and Extension, and increased natural mortality on Georges Bank. Overall, increasing incidental fishing mortality on NLS South and Extension only had minor effects, while high natural mortality run reduced both biomass and landings substantially.

Dr. Naresh Pradhan provided a detailed presentation on the expected economic impacts based on the SAMS model projections.

Discussion:

The PDT discussed the assumptions of fishing mortality in the out years of the projections; in open areas, the mortality rate is assumed to be 0.36 (F_{ABC}) and for NLS South, the fishing mortality rate is ramped up for several years and then turns into an open area. The NLS Extension is assumed to be closed until 2028, and Closed Area II until 2029.

Regarding the seasonal closure, several PDT members were supportive of a seasonal closure in October and November due to poor meat yields and overlap with windowpane bycatch, given the species move to deeper waters in these months. There was a discussion on the length of the closure and whether to recommend access again in the spring. For the first year of access, the PDT weighed carryover considerations, start of the survey season in June, and additional growth for the first year. There was support in retaining the default for not permitting transit through the potential NLS Access Area unless on an access area trip.

The bycatch projections for stocks with a scallop sub-ACL will be done through correspondence.

Scallop PDT recommendations on FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default) specifications:

- **OFL and ABC**:
  - Updated OFL and ABC for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default)
- **DAS and Nantucket Lightship management:**
  - No PDT consensus on whether to recommend an access area trip; the PDT suggested two options for the AP and Committee to consider:
    - 36 DAS and no NLS (North & South) Access Area trip (Status Quo)
    - 32 DAS and one NLS (North & South) Access Area trip with a 12,000 lb trip limit
      - Rationale: no recruitment in other open bottom areas, desire to have one option with lower DAS and a limited access area trip, and desire to have an option with higher DAS and no access area trip to allow for additional scallop growth. Need to consider trip profitability and sedimentation impacts within an access area.
  - Delayed opening in year 1 (FY 2027) of May 15
  - Seasonal closure from October through December until otherwise changed in a future management action.
  - No transit permitted through access area if not on a declared access area trip.
- **Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM):**
  - Set NGOM TAL at fishing mortality rate of 0.21 (status quo) using all open NGOM areas given the area has been heavily targeted and there is relatively low biomass observed this year.
  - Set FY 2028 as 50% of NGOM TAL, which is the default.

Public Comment:

- **Kirby Aarsheim (Scallop Committee member)** asked why 38 DAS wasn't included in the analysis given the Committee motion of 32-42 DAS consideration. Later in the conversation, Kirby followed up by asking why 36 DAS are not considered irrespective of a potential access area; there is a need to balance between current year and future years

with where scallop biomass can be found (either open area and/or in a potential access area). Staff explained that while 38 DAS was not specifically analyzed, the scenario could be analyzed between the 36 and 40 DAS projections. The PDT also explained that DAS and access area fishing are not independent, and there are inherent trade-offs between short-term and long-term benefits when allocating additional harvest.

- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** did not agree that a decision on allowing an access area trip should be done in conjunction with open-area DAS decision.
- **Eric Hansen (Scallop Committee member)** recommended delayed opening of May 15th and a seasonal closure from October 1 until January 1. This would help stabilize market price, spread out harvest, reduce incidental mortality, and any high grading will be minimally impacted by temperature.

Next steps:

- Revise the draft 2027 Specifications Decision Document and the draft Supplemental Information Report (SIR) to reflect the Scallop PDT's input (Connor Buckley, Jenny Couture)

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRAMEWORK 42

Council staff provided an overview of the work and decisions made to date on Framework 42 (FW42), specifically the region-specific DAS and NGOM sub-management areas. Work on FW42 will be further developed once the Council makes final recommendations on the ongoing specifications action.

Discussion:

FW42 will not be discussed during the December Council meeting. Between now and the next PDT meeting in early January, staff requested PDT input on potential analyses and questions to consider to help the AP and Committee develop their range of alternatives for this action.

AGENDA ITEM #3: OTHER BUSINESS

Council staff presented an overview of upcoming meetings and decision points regarding the specifications setting and Framework 42 actions. An important meeting to note is the Joint Scallop AP and Committee meeting in Boston, MA on November 17th. Final action on the specifications action is expected during the December 8-10 Council meeting in Newport, RI.

Dr. Hart shared that this meeting is her last Scallop PDT meeting as she will step down from the PDT at the end of this year. PDT members shared their congratulations on her retirement, and the impact Dr. Hart has had on the science and management of the scallop resource and fishery.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.