Scallop Management Measures for Framework 42

Discussion Document

June NEFMC Meeting Draft

June 24, 2026

Background

Development of Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) sub-management areas and regional Limited Access Day-at-Sea (DAS) allocations, including consideration of DAS carryover provisions, were approved by the Council for development in 2026 to be included in Framework 42, an action that will set specifications for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default) and other management measures. To address these priorities, the Scallop PDT has convened twice, on February 26 and April 7, to develop draft options and relevant analyses. The Scallop AP and Committee provided guidance and additional tasking to the Scallop PDT at their recent meetings on June 2 & 3, respectively.

Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas

The main purpose of developing NGOM sub-management areas is to limit the realized fishing mortality on Stellwagen Bank, where recent fishing effort has been heavily concentrated, and to redistribute effort to the other banks and ledges in the NGOM that support robust scallop beds. This would make realized effort more proportional to the fishing mortality rate across the NGOM that is used to set the NGOM Total Allowable Landings (TAL). Additional benefits might include extending the length of the season and reducing vessel crowding on Stellwagen Bank, both concerns that have been consistently noted by scallop fishermen active in the NGOM.

Scallop AP recommendations: The Scallop AP did not support further development of NGOM sub-management areas, however, several AP members provided input that making any sub-areas available at the same time would have a greater positive impact on spreading out the fleet's effort. Other AP members noted that sub-management areas may not address concerns that they thought were more important to the management of the NGOM, such as improving fishing practices.

Scallop Committee recommendations: The Scallop Committee supported continued development of management measures to create sub-management areas in the NGOM, and tasked the PDT with the development of an alternative based on Concept 1 (Figure 1), and included options for both consecutive and concurrent access.

Management boundaries

Several concepts for the boundaries of two sub-management areas were discussed by the PDT. While the PDT considered options that would have three sub-management areas, there was no support for further consideration due to the limited additional benefits to the objectives outlined above, and the additional complications for enforcement and monitoring.

Concept 1 (Figure 1) would create a northern and southern area divided by the 41°15'N. The area south of 41°15'N and west of 70°30'W would be designated for continuous transit, allowing vessels home ported south of the 42°20'N to equitably access the northern area.

Concept 2 (Figure 2) defines a smaller southern unit limited to the Stellwagen Bank area (Scallop Framework 32) with a small buffer area (1-1.5 nm^2). The remainder of the NGOM management area would be the northern sub-area.

Area management

The development of sub-management areas within the NGOM could allow the Council to set a fishing mortality rate in each independently, however, the aggregate fishing mortality rate used to set the NGOM TAL would still be limited between F=0.15 and F=0.25. Under the current regulations, if a southern area were to be closed (F=0), then the Council would be limited to setting a TAL for the northern sub-management area so that the aggregate fishing mortality rate remained between F=0.15 and F=0.25. Deductions for observer coverage and research set-aside would be split between the two areas.

While sub-areas could be designed to open sequential (one area open at a time) or concurrently (both areas open simultaneously), the PDT strongly recommends sequential openings. Guidance from GARFO staff indicated that sequential access will be easier to monitor and enforce, as well as reduce the number of VMS declaration codes needed. The PDT discussed opening either the southern or northern area first on April 1. Then, following the closure of that sub-area, when the harvest limit had been reached, the other sub-area would open. With continued difficulties ensuring a final rule is in place for April 1, measures that reduce the impact of a delayed rule on NGOM fishing operations would be beneficial.

Accountability Measures

The NGOM management area has an accountability measure (AM) that specifies that any overage of the NGOM set-aside requires a pound-for-pound payback the following year. With separate sub-management areas, this AM could be modified to be specific to each sub-management area.

Figure 1. Draft Concept 1, which was developed initially in Fall 2025, would separate the southern extent of the NGOM management area along the 41 15’N boundary line as well as delineating the area west of Stellwagen Bank as an area for continuous transit.

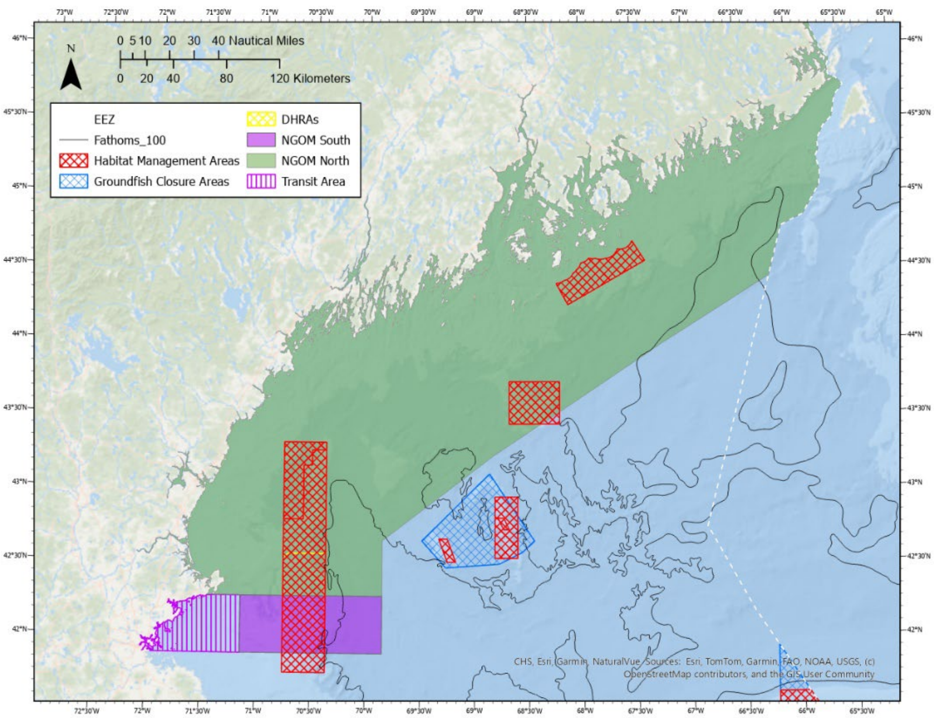
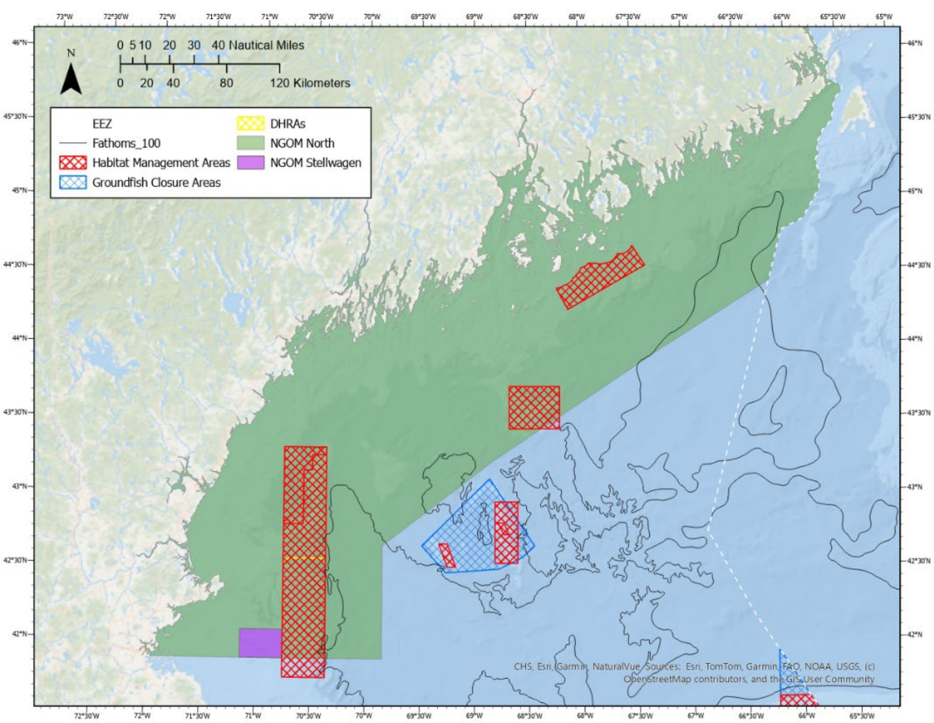
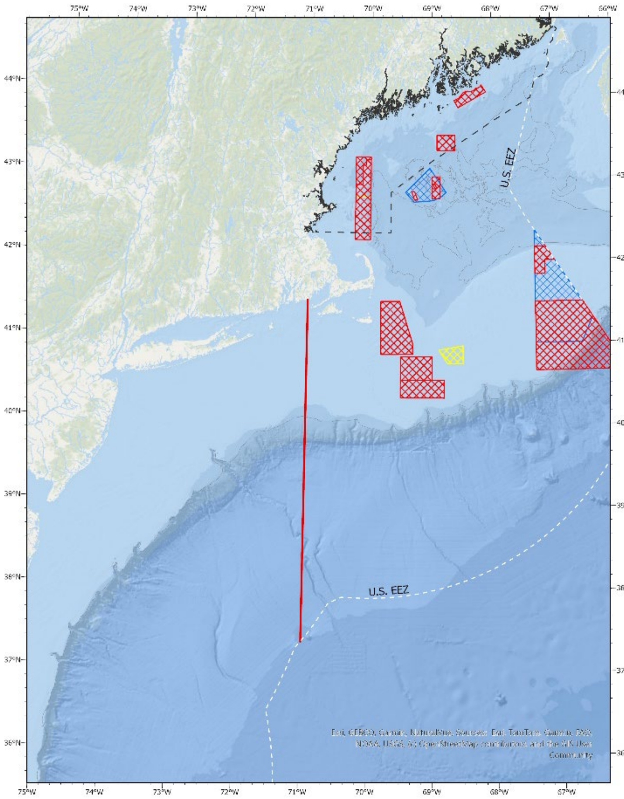


Figure 2. Draft Concept 2, which would reduce the size of the southern sub-area to only the immediate survey domain on Stellwagen Bank with a small buffer.



Regional Limited Access DAS allocations

Figure 3. 71°W has been the proposed boundary line to delineate Mid-Atlantic from Georges Bank Days-at-Sea.



Under the current framework, Limited Access DAS can be used anywhere in the open bottom. Enabling the Council to allocate DAS separately between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank/South Channel, delineated by the 71°W boundary, would allow for more regionalized management of Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank scallops which are experiencing different patterns of natural and fishing mortality as well as other life history processes (e.g., growth; Scallop Research Track Peer Review Report).

The main purpose of developing regional DAS allocations is to enable the Council to constrain open bottom fishing effort in years where LPUE in one region is substantially higher than the other, increasing the risk of regional overharvest. Since 2021, the fleet has focused their effort on Georges Bank (Table 1, Figure 3), and in 2023, overfishing was found to have occurred on Georges Bank (August 19, 2025 Scallop PDT Memo to the SSC).

The Scallop PDT recognized the benefits of regional management of the open-bottom but cautioned against excessive management complexity that could further strain administration, monitoring, enforcement, and the flexibility of vessels to target scallop beds with higher catch rates. The PDT was supportive of DAS-trading between Limited Access vessels to allow for vessel flexibility. GARFO staff have commented that there is capacity to support monitoring and accounting of regional DAS management but shared that trading of DAS between regions could not be supported for implementation in FY 2027 due to ongoing work to rebuild the Allocation Management System (AMS). However, GARFO staff have shared that this would be viable for implementation in FY 2028.

Regional DAS allocations could also offer an opportunity to test in-season adjustments. A Proposed Rule for the Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment was published on May 14, 2026, which would enable in-season adjustments to the Scallop Fishery Management Plan. Dynamic adjustments to DAS allocations that redistribute, increase, or decrease total open-bottom effort could make the system more resilient when observed scallop yields diverge from projections (e.g. predators, marine heatwave).

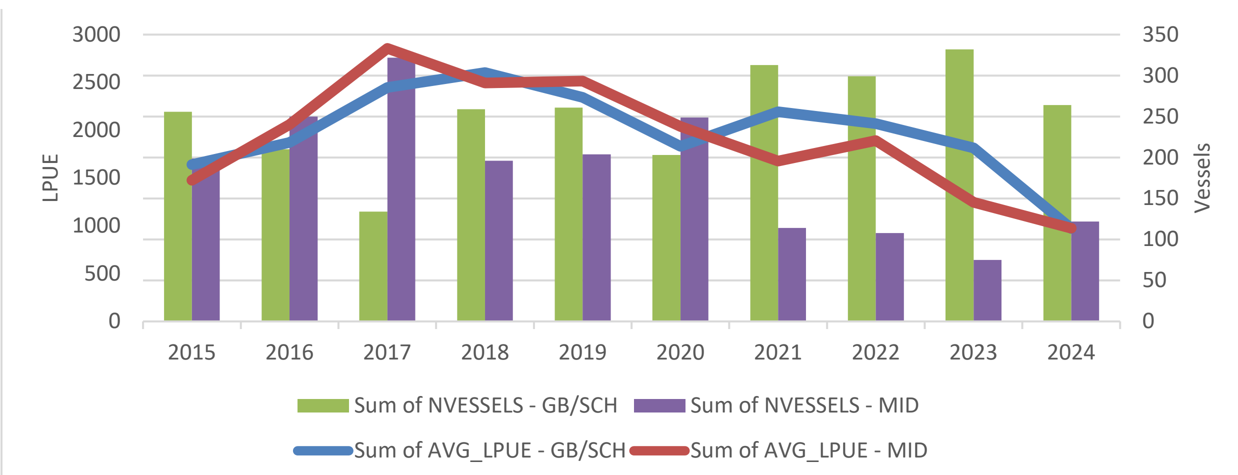
Scallop AP Recommendations: The AP was divided on the benefits of regional DAS allocations relative to the reduced vessel operational flexibility. While several AP members did not support further development, others preferred to continue development for implementation in FY2028 when support for trading of DAS between vessels and regions would be available. The AP unanimously did not support reductions in the number of DAS that could be carried over between fishing years. The AP also did not support development of alternatives for differential DAS counting.

Scallop Committee Recommendations: The Committee recommended continued development of these measures to allocate region-specific DAS, but did not support reducing DAS carryover. The Committee did not support development of alternatives for differential DAS counting.

Table 1 – Limited Access scallop vessel effort (in VMS hours fished) by region, FY2021 – FY2025 (April – July)

Region	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025 (Apr-Jul)
GB – Open	90,769 (85%)	30,462 (64%)	73,079 (70%)	112,464 (78%)	38,246 (62%)
MAB – Open	16,037 (15%)	17,182 (36%)	7,069 (30%)	31,240 (22%)	23,347 (38%)
Total - Open	106,806	47,644	80,148	143,704	62,492
GB – Access	60,386 (45%)	37,375	37,544	59,963 (55%)	44,944
MAB– Access	74,356 (55%)	0	0	49,813 (45%)	0
Total – Access	134,742	37,375	37,544	109,776	44,944
GB – Total	151,155 (63%)	67,837 (80%)	110,633 (77%)	172,427 (68%)	83,190 (78%)
MAB - Total	90,393 (37%)	17,182 (20%)	7,069 (23%)	81,053 (32%)	23,347 (22%)
Grand Total	241,548	85,019	117,702	253,480	106,537

Figure 4. LPUE and active scallop vessels between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank/South Channel, 2015 – 2024.



Regional DAS management approaches

Regional DAS allocations (Concept 1): Limited Access vessels would be allocated Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank DAS, delineated by the 71W boundary line. The number of DAS set in each region would be limited so that the overall open area fishing mortality rate could not exceed $F_{MSY} = 0.49$, however the regional fishing mortality reference points ($F_{MSY\ GB} = 0.36$, $F_{MSY\ MA} = 1.56$) could be considered, and so that the combined fishing mortality rate for access and open areas combined is at or below the F_{ACT}.

Differential DAS Counting (Concept 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. For example, an adjustment of 1.2:1 on Georges Bank, a vessel that fished for 14 DAS on Georges Bank would be charged 16.8 DAS, effectively disincentivizing fishing effort spent in that region. This could also be used to incentivize fishing effort in a region.

DAS Carryover

Current scallop regulations enable Limited Access vessels to carry over up to 10 DAS into the subsequent fishing year. If DAS are allocated regionally, a vessel's remaining DAS could be carried over, subject to the existing 10-DAS carryover limit, and used in the subsequent fishing year. Previous analysis of carryover used by Limited Access vessels from 2011-2022 suggests that Limited Access (FT, FT-SM, PT-SM) vessels carry over 5 DAS on average each year. The PDT discussed two options for managing DAS carryover between FY 2026 and FY 2027:

Proportional Split: A Limited Access vessel's remaining FY 2026 DAS would be apportioned using the same ratio of Mid-Atlantic to Georges Bank DAS used to set FY 2027 specifications. For example, a vessel could carry over 7 DAS from FY 2026 into FY 2027. Under FW42 specifications, a vessel might be allocated 12 Mid-Atlantic DAS and 12 Georges Bank DAS. These 7 DAS carried over into FY 2027 could be split by the same proportion, with 3.5 DAS added to their balance for each region.

Break-even Point for DAS allocation

For the April 7 Scallop PDT meeting, staff analyzed the minimum number of DAS that would need to be allocated in a region for a given Limited Access scallop vessel to cover their total costs, dependent on the LPUE, scallop price, and the proportion of the allocation, which is used to allocate a vessel's fixed costs.

This analysis can be used as a starting point for discussions of the minimum viable DAS allocation in an area, but should be used cautiously due to the number of assumptions that are made. These include a weighted average scallop price per pound of $16.05 (2024 value). While this represents a reasonable average price, there is typically variation in the price of Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank scallop prices. There is also substantial uncertainty in the fixed costs used, both in the age of the data (2022), and the low response rate of the survey used to collect these data. Lastly, these scenarios are assuming that all of a vessel's revenue to break-even is derived from fishing on a scallop DAS (i.e., that there is no access area allocation).
The early results of this analysis suggest that in a scenario where 40% of the DAS were available in a given region, at catch rates of 1500 lb/day, approximately 14 DAS would be needed for a vessel to break even. If the other region therefore had 60% of the exploitable biomass and DAS allocation, then at catch rates of 2000 lb/day, approximately 15 DAS would be needed.

Table 2 – Breakeven point for regional DAS allocations, assuming fixed scallop price, fixed costs, and no access area allocation.

LPUE LB/DAS	1,500	2,000
Price /LB	$16.05	$16.05
Variable Cost or Trip Cost/DAS	$2,334	$2,334
Median_Annual Fixed Cost (FC)/Year/Vessel	$325,985	$325,985
George Bank (GB) and Mid-Atlantic (MA) Proportions	0.4	0.6
Crew Share	0.48	0.48
Vessel Cost (Median value from 2022 survey)	$850,000	$850,000
CD Rate	0.04	0.04
OppCost_V	$13,600	$20,400
Fixed Cost (FC)	$143,994	$215,991

Breakeven DAS =	14.14	15.04