

## Scallop Management Measures for Framework 42

### Discussion Document

#### Scallop AP and Committee Meetings

#### Providence, Rhode Island

June 2-3, 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 begin developing options for draft management measures. These options are presented below for consideration by the Scallop Advisory Panel (AP) and Committee and will be further refined and developed as measures to include in Framework 42.

#### **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.

#### *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<sup>2</sup>). 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.

### *Discussion Questions*

1. How would separate management of a southern/Stellwagen Bank sub-area affect participation from fishermen who also participate in lobster fishery, Massachusetts State Waters scallop fishery, or broader federal scallop fishery?
2. How would opening the larger northern sub-area (Figure 1) on April 1, instead of the southern/Stellwagen bank sub-area, affect participation and fishing operations? For vessels opting to fish in the northern sub-area, what other factors would influence the decision to fish in that area?
3. How might in-shell possession limits need to be adjusted to prevent transferring shell-stock between sub-areas?
4. How should deductions for observer coverage (1% of NGOM ABC) and RSA (25,000 lb) be apportioned between two sub-areas?

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.

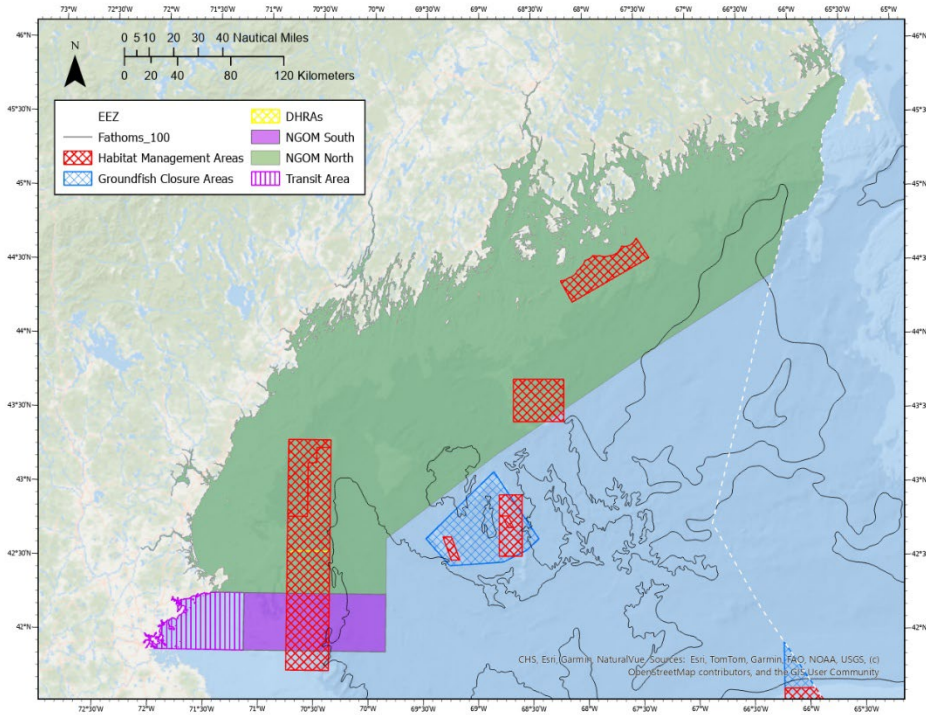
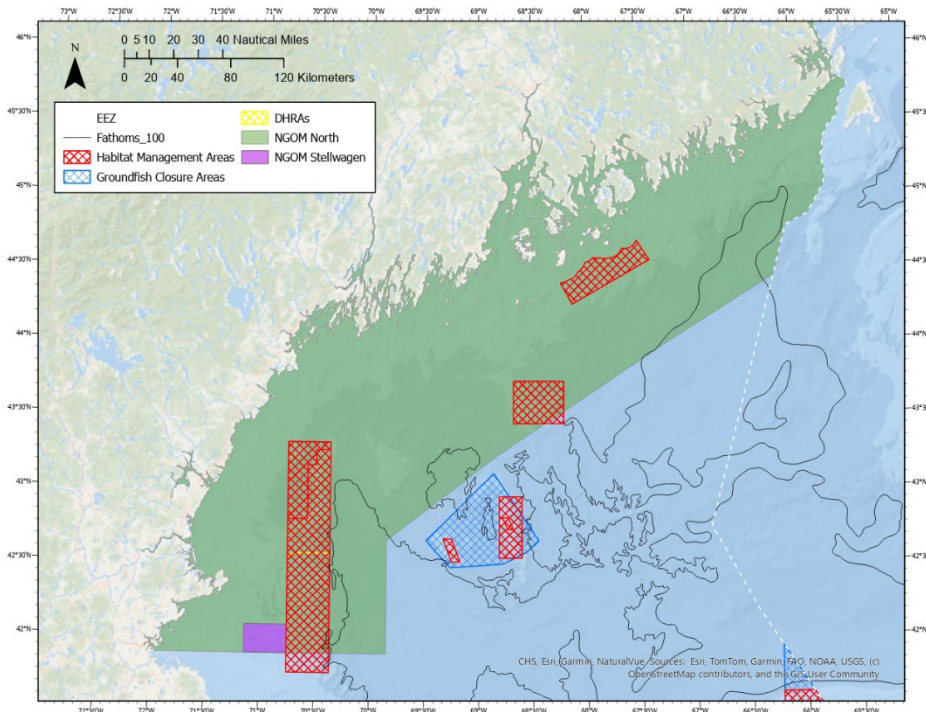


Figure 2. Draft Concept 2, which would reduce the size of the southern sub-area to only the immediate survey domain on Stellwagen Bank with a small buffer.



## **Regional Limited Access DAS allocations**

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).

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

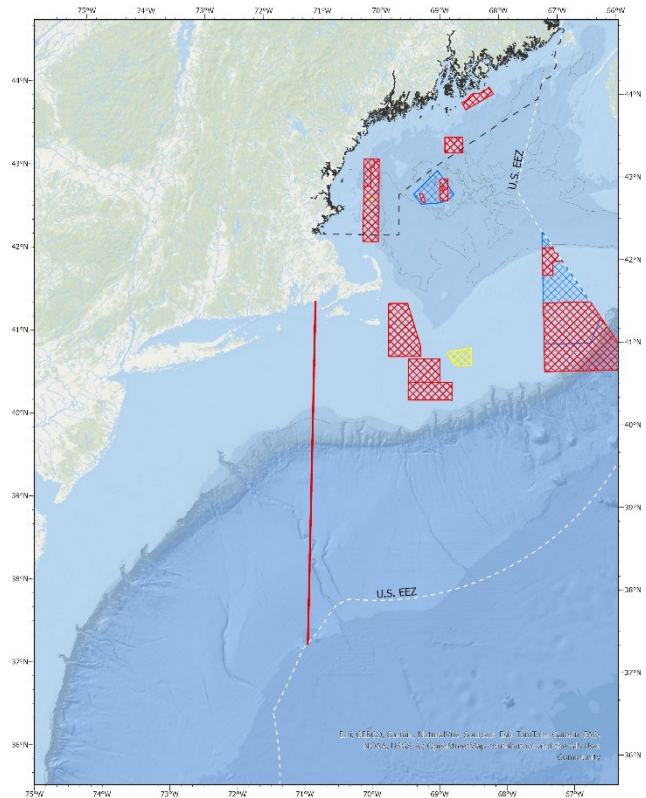
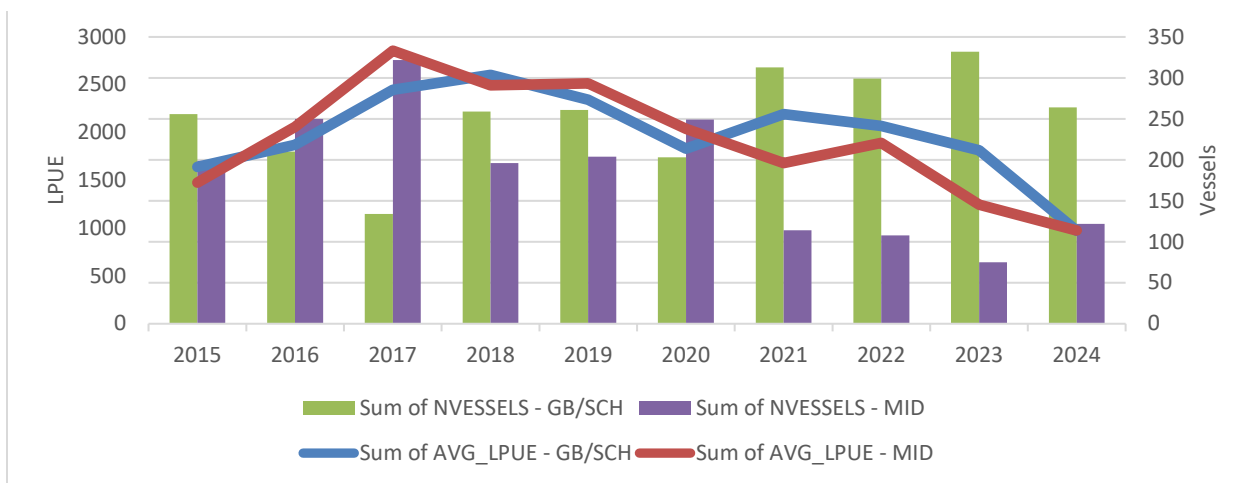


Table 1 – Limited Access scallop vessel effort (in VMS hours fished) by region, FY2021 – FY2025 (April – July)

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%)
<b>Total - Open</b>	<b>106,806</b>	<b>47,644</b>	<b>80,148</b>	<b>143,704</b>	<b>62,492</b>
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
<b>Total – Access</b>	<b>134,742</b>	<b>37,375</b>	<b>37,544</b>	<b>109,776</b>	<b>44,944</b>
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%)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>241,548</b>	<b>85,019</b>	<b>117,702</b>	<b>253,480</b>	<b>106,537</b>

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



### Discussion Questions

1. Are regional DAS allocations practical for implementation in FY 2027 if DAS trading could not be supported until FY 2028? If not, would differential DAS counting between the regions be a viable alternative?
2. Regional DAS allocations limit the fleet’s capacity to use all their DAS in a single area. How might vessels adjust their operations to compensate? Would you expect this to lead to economic harm for certain Limited Access scallopers, such as those who typically rely more heavily on one region than the other?
3. Are there risks of localized overharvest if vessels are constrained to a region without the flexibility to trade DAS?
4. How might a regional DAS system build in dynamic in-season adjustments that could redistribute, increase, or decrease open bottom effort in a region based on LPUE?

## *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.

**Remove or restrict DAS carryover into FY 2027:** Alternatively, the Council may wish to limit or remove the DAS carryover provision temporarily as a way to negotiate the transition year. This would prevent the complex apportionment of current DAS to region-specific DAS.

## *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.

<b>LPUE LB/DAS</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Price /LB</b>	\$16.05	\$16.05
<b>Variable Cost or Trip Cost/DAS</b>	\$2,334	\$2,334
<b>Median_Annual Fixed Cost (FC)/Year/Vessel</b>	\$325,985	\$325,985
<b>George Bank (GB) and Mid-Atlantic (MA) Proportions</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Crew Share</b>	0.48	0.48
<b>Vessel Cost (Median value from 2022 survey)</b>	\$850,000	\$850,000
<b>CD Rate</b>	0.04	0.04
<b>OppCost_V</b>	\$13,600	\$20,400
<b>Fixed Cost (FC)</b>	\$143,994	\$215,991
<b>Breakeven DAS =</b>	<b>14.14</b>	<b>15.04</b>