



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492

Daniel Salerno, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Plan Development Team

August 26-27, 2026
Buzzards Bay, MA, webinar

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) met on August 26-27, 2026 in Buzzards Bay, MA and via webinar at 9:00 AM each day to 1) review 2026 scallop survey results; 2) discuss data decisions for combining biomass estimates, data on fishery performance, and potential management scenarios for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default); 3) review vessel monitoring system (VMS) fishery data and develop PDT input for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default); 4) discuss Framework 42 management measures (regional day-at-sea (DAS) and sub-management areas in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM); 5) review the Scallop PDT memo to the Groundfish PDT regarding Georges Bank yellowtail flounder; 6) review the draft three-year work plan; and 7) other business.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Sharon Benjamin (GARFO), Jenny Couture (NEFMC), Dr. Adam Delargy (SMASST), Dr. Bill DuPaul (College William & Mary), Ben Galuardi (GARFO), Dr. Dvora Hart (NEFSC), Carl Huntsberger (ME DMR), Emily Keiley (GARFO), Dr. Robert Murphy (NEFSC), Tasha O'Hara (CFF), Danielle Palmer (GARFO), Chris Parkins (RI DEM), Dr. Naresh Pradhan (NEFMC), Sally Roman (VIMS), and Kelly Whitmore (MA DMF). Scallop Committee: Chair Melanie Griffin, Vice Chair Eric Hanson, Togue Brawn, Doug Christel, Melissa Smith, and Ted Platz; Scallop Advisory Panel: Kyle Grant and Peter Hughes. Approximately 45 members of the public attended.

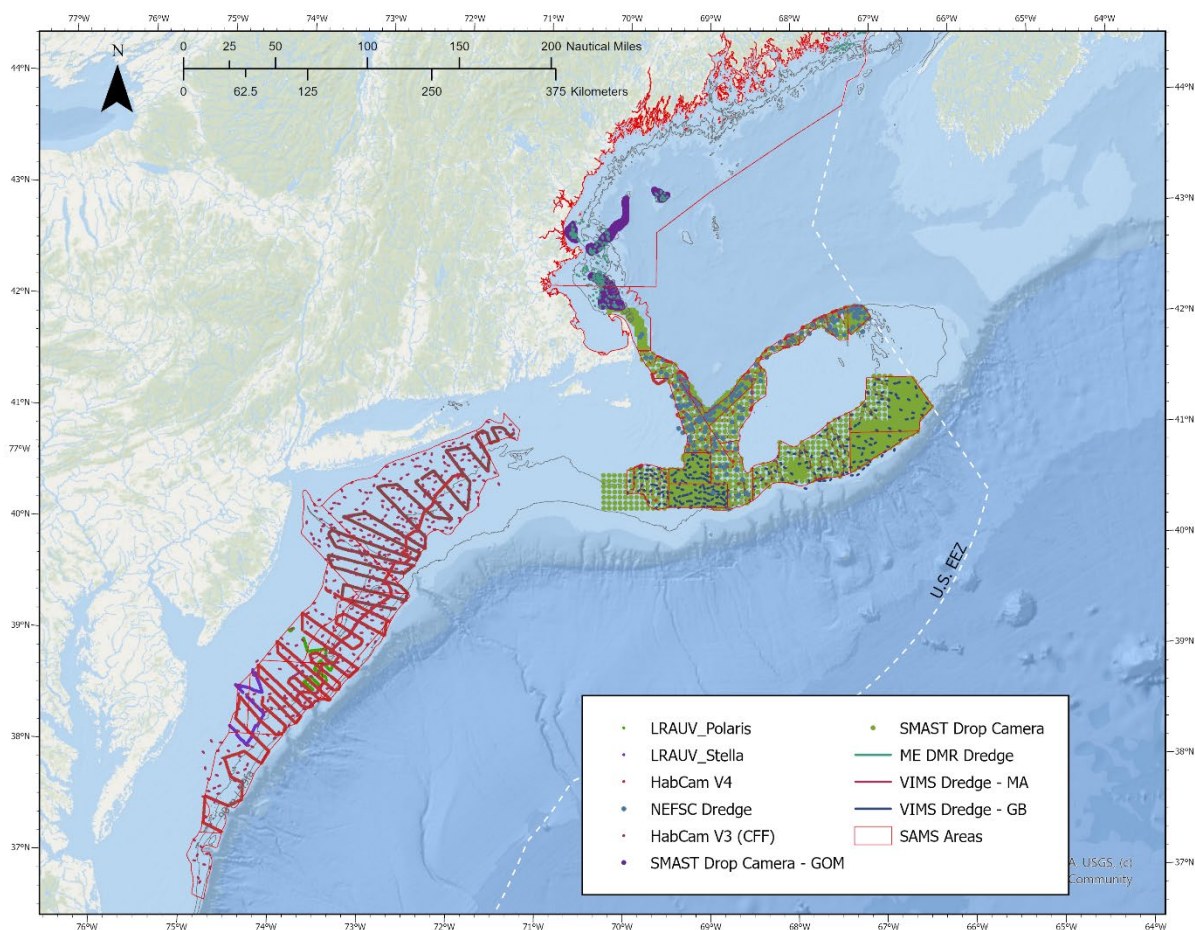
AGENDA ITEM #1: 2026 SCALLOP SURVEY PRESENTATIONS

The PDT received presentations on findings from the 2026 scallop resource surveys. Short reports and presentations can be accessed at the following links. Key points from PDT discussion for each presentation are summarized below.

1	Virginia Institute for Marine Science (VIMS)	Short Report	Presentation Additional information: Observations from the dredge surveys
2	UMass Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMASST)	Short Report: - Georges Bank - Gulf of Maine	Presentation: - Georges Bank - Gulf of Maine

3	<i>Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF)</i>	Short Report	Presentation
4	<i>Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)</i>	Short Report: - Dredge - HabCam/LRAUV	Presentation
5	<i>Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR)</i>	Short Report	Presentation

Figure 1 – Extent of 2026 Scallop Surveys. All SAMS areas were surveyed by both at least one optical tool as well as dredge gear.



1. *VIMS 2026 Dredge Survey of the Mid-Atlantic Bight and Georges Bank Resource Areas – Sally Roman (VIMS)*

The VIMS cooperative dredge survey documented a mixed outlook across the Mid-Atlantic. Recruitment remained generally weak, although recruitment was noted in Block Island and Long Island areas and high survival in Delmarva, with multiple year classes present for the first time since 2016. Elephant Trunk biomass roughly doubled from 2025, driven by growth of the remaining cohort and higher average meat weights, while Virginia continued to show poor survival and declining biomass. Most northern Mid-Atlantic SAMS areas experienced biomass declines. On Georges Bank, the survey confirmed a major recruitment event in Closed Area II

Access, where scallops averaged approximately 29 mm shell height and recruitment was exceptionally high. Nantucket Lightship South was dominated by a single cohort that grew from roughly 65 mm to 80 mm over the past year, indicating healthy growth. However, the area experienced slight declines in biomass associated with increased natural mortality, reflected by elevated clapper counts and observations of sea stars, but overall exploitable biomass increased. Recruitment was also observed in Nantucket Lightship North, Nantucket Lightship West, Closed Area II, and parts of the Southern Flank.

2. *SMAST Georges Bank Survey Results 2026* – Adam Delargy (SMAST)

The SMAST drop camera survey confirmed that Closed Area II Access experienced one of the strongest recruitment events observed on Georges Bank in recent years. Extremely dense aggregations of pre-recruit scallops were recorded, with densities commonly exceeding 5 to 10 scallops/m². Nantucket Lightship South continues to hold more than 50% of the biomass on Georges Bank, with a single, large cohort centered near 75 mm shell height. Southern Flank also continued to support significant biomass and growth within a small hotspot observed in 2025, as well as additional recruitment to the west of Closed Area II. While abundance declined in Nantucket Lightship South and Southern Flank relative to last year because the earlier recruitment pulse had grown and spread out, total and exploitable biomass increased as scallops matured. Moderate recruitment was observed in Northern Flank, Great South Channel, and other areas, with particularly strong abundance of recruit scallops appearing in Great South Channel that were not observed the previous year. The survey also noted widespread sea star presence in Closed Area I and southern Georges Bank areas.

3. *2026 CFF HabCam Survey* – Tasha O’Hara (CFF)

The CFF HabCam survey also observed the large recruitment event observed in Closed Area II Access and nearby portions of Southern Flank, as well as the continued growth in the Nantucket Lightship South. Southern Flank also showed evidence of continued growth and increased pre-recruit abundance. Across the Mid-Atlantic, recruitment remained patchy and generally below historical levels, although notable hotspots of pre-recruits were observed near the Long Island/Block Island border and in portions of the New York Bight. Clapper densities were highest in Nantucket Lightship South, where habitat conditions had changed noticeably, including increased silt accumulation and bryozoan growth.

4. *2026 HabCam/Dredge Scallop Survey Results* – Dvora Hart (NEFSC)

The NEFSC dredge and HabCam surveys. More than half of the total Georges Bank biomass was estimated to be concentrated in Nantucket Lightship South, while many other Georges Bank areas supported only scattered biomass. Moderate recruitment was observed in Closed Area I, the eastern Northern Flank, and the northern edge of Closed Area II. Particularly noteworthy were large numbers of pre-recruits in northern Great South Channel and Closed Area II, which could represent an important future year class but are unlikely to contribute to the fishery until roughly 2029. In the Mid-Atlantic, biomass remained heavily dependent on the strong 2022-year class first observed in 2024. Recruitment in 2026 was below average, and Dr. Hart expressed concern that the region may no longer be producing strong year classes as consistently as it did historically.

5. *2026 Gulf of Marine Scallop Survey Results* – Carl Huntsberger (ME DMR)

The Maine DMR dredge survey found generally stable to declining conditions across much of the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM), with a few localized areas of larger exploitable scallops. Platts Bank experienced an increase in biomass as the surviving portion of the 2022 cohort continued to grow, although abundance declined from earlier expectations. Ipswich Bay biomass declined approximately 21%, while Jeffreys Ledge showed a reduction in biomass and lacked the high-density catches seen in previous surveys. Northern Stellwagen experienced one of the largest declines, with biomass declining by 70% within the overlapping SMAST/ME DMR survey domain, and little evidence of strong recruitment. At the same time, the survey identified a substantial increase in biomass in the area between Stellwagen Bank and Gloucester, which accounted for roughly one-third of the Northern Gulf of Maine biomass estimate. Southern Stellwagen outside of the NGOM also declined but retained abundant two-year-old scallops that may support future biomass.

6. *SMAST Gulf of Maine Survey Results 2026* – Adam Delargy (SMAST)

The SMAST drop camera survey in the Gulf of Maine showed signs of improving recruitment despite relatively stable overall biomass. Across all surveyed Gulf of Maine areas, abundance increased approximately 34% because of widespread recruitment, while total biomass and exploitable biomass remained similar to 2025. Platts Bank, Southern Stellwagen, and the closed portion of Jeffreys Ledge all increased across abundance, total biomass, and exploitable biomass metrics. Recruitment signals were observed on Platts Bank, Jeffreys Ledge, and on Stellwagen Bank. The most prominent aggregation consisted of recruit scallops (35-75 mm) in the open-bottom portion of Southern Stellwagen. The portions of Stellwagen Bank within the Western Gulf of Maine Closure continued to support very large, older scallops.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalping Fund)** asked Ms. Roman to clarify the scale of the recruitment event in Closed Area II. Ms. Roman replied that 5 baskets of pre-recruit scallops is substantial given animals of that size are not fully selected by the survey dredge. Mr. Minkiewicz also asked Dr. Delargy about the status of the deep-water cohort north of Closed Area I – Sliver, as well as the density of predators in the area. Dr. Delargy responded that there were fewer scallops in that area overall, but there was a mix of year classes with both small and very large animals. Dr. Delargy also clarified that they observed a high density of sea stars in the area but have not processed those data yet. Mr. Minkiewicz also asked Ms. O'Hara about their use of automated detection in annotating optical data, to which Ms. O'Hara replied that while they use automated detection tools for other applications its use in data processing for scallop surveys is not yet approved.
- **Ron Smolowitz (CFF)** asked Ms. Roman to clarify the scale of the dense year class in the Nantucket Lightship South (NLS-S). Ms. Roman replied that after a 15-minute tow, the deck was completely full from both the commercial and survey dredge.
- **Kyle Grant (Scallop Advisory Panel)** asked for clarification on the expected meat weight from the NLS-S cohort. Ms. Roman replied that 15 grams was the expected meat weight at 100 mm shell height for this cohort, but the average meat weight from the survey was 8 grams.
- **Peter Hughes (Atlantic Capes Fisheries, Inc.)** asked the PDT about why the Nantucket Lightship West (NLS-W) had not seen recent recruitment, and whether that was attributable to predation or just lack of settlement. Dr. Delargy responded that the area

was subject to heavy fishing pressure in 2025, but likely just had not seen scallop settlement since then.

- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** asked whether the revision made to the shell-height meat weight equations for Scallop Framework 40 (2025) were considered to be accurate and if the PDT were comfortable with its use in setting 2027 specifications. PDT members replied that they were reviewing several additional sensitivity equations this year to ensure the best fit to the 2026 data, but ultimately interannual variability in shell-height meat weight means that their fit to scallops under future conditions is uncertain. Dr. Hart also mentioned that there are updates that could be made, as well as new models to explore, and that she could present that work at a future meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 2: DISCUSSION ON 2026 SURVEY RESULTS

The PDT discussed survey results and data treatment decisions. Key points from PDT discussion are summarized below for each topic. Final PDT recommendations on survey data treatment will be available in the PDT memo to the SSC for their October meeting, which is forthcoming.

SAMS Area considerations

The PDT reviewed SAMS boundaries and considered whether adjustments were necessary. Reviewing the spatial distribution of recruit scallops across the resource, the PDT did not consider any boundary modifications necessary to fully encompass areas of recruitment, such as in Closed Area II - Access. However, the PDT discussed and ultimately recommended including the small amount of biomass on the backside of Cape Cod into the South Stellwagen SAMS area so that the area between the Great South Channel and the NGOM were fully accounted for. Next, the PDT discussed modifications to the NLS-S SAMS area to allow for the PDT to separately consider projections of the traditional NLS-S as well as the extension to the east that was added in 2025 to encompass this current cohort. The PDT debated several new boundaries that would separate a slightly slower growing portion of this cohort to the east from the slightly faster growing portion to the west, and ultimately opted to analyze to different boundary modifications and make a final recommendation on this SAMS area via correspondence after the meeting. The group also discussed recruitment in the Long Island and Block Island areas but considered the aggregation too small to warrant a rotational closure.

Shell-height meat-weight (SH/MW) assumptions and curves

The PDT reviewed the SH/MW equations developed during the 2025 Research Track Assessment, which applied generalized additive models (GAMS) to survey SH/MW data, and their fit to the 2026 survey data. Survey groups included alternative SH/MW equations as sensitivities for the NGOM, NLS-S, and all Mid-Atlantic SAMS areas. After review, the Scallop PDT recommended including the extra year of data in SH/MW equations for the NGOM and NLS-S, where there was very little difference in SH/MW between years. For the Mid-Atlantic SAMS areas, the PDT reviewed the fit of the data against a new equation presented by Dr. Hart at the July 29th PDT meeting and recommended its use for the 2026 surveys in those areas. Use of the new SH/MW equation in the Mid-Atlantic led to slightly higher biomass estimates in the Mid-Atlantic relative to the 2025 Research Track Assessment equation but was a better fit to the 2026 survey data.

Dredge efficiency

The PDT reviewed potential dredge efficiency issues. While survey densities in the NLS-S and Closed Area II – Access were high, Ms. Roman shared that they were not high enough to overfill the dredge and lead to reduced gear efficiency. No adjustments to the dredge efficiency parameter were recommended for any of the areas.

Data agreement and combining survey estimates

The PDT discussed discrepancies between surveys in each area and reached agreement on combining the survey estimates. The PDT's default approach is to take a simple average across all available surveys in each SAMS area. In Closed Area II – Access, the PDT discussed a very large estimate of biomass and average meat weight from the dredge survey that did not align with the optical data. Ms. Roman reviewed the dredge sub-sampling ratio for a single, high-density station that was incorrectly recorded and led to a much larger extrapolation of total biomass for that station. Correcting the sub-sampling ratio brought the dredge estimate into alignment with the optical data. In the NLS-South, the dredge survey estimate was substantially lower than the optical surveys, which upon reviewing the individual survey stations on GIS, the PDT attributed to the dredge survey not having a station directly in the narrow band of very high density scallops in that area, leading to lower estimates of density that underestimated total biomass. The PDT discussed how to resolve this and ultimately thought that this issue did not warrant including the dredge estimate or revisions to dredge efficiency, and that Council staff could communicate that this estimate may be slightly conservative.

In the Gulf of Maine, the PDT agreed to take the average of the ME DMR and SMAST drop camera surveys in the Area of Interest where the two domains overlapped and add in the surveyed biomass within each region from each survey in the areas where the surveys did not overlap. Mr. Huntsberger discussed concerns about the increase in biomass on Stellwagen Bank outside of the Area of Interest, which only came from the ME DMR dredge estimate. Beyond the above noted areas, the PDT reached consensus on taking the average across the available survey estimates for all other areas with relatively quick review of the data.

Discussion regarding VMS Fishery Data

Council staff presented FY 2025 – 2026 VMS fishery data of recent scallop activity and the Scallop PDT discussed the degree of effort in the Mid-Atlantic in FY 2026 relative to previous years, as well as where fishing effort was occurring outside of SAMS area boundaries where biomass was being surveyed and included in annual projections. The group also discussed effort in areas with currently active offshore wind leases.

PDT Outlook for FY 2027

The PDT discussed their outlook on the scallop resource and fishery for FY 2027, noting that NLS-S was the only viable option for a potential access area trip allocation. With the large recruitment event, the PDT strongly recommended that Closed Area II remain closed this year. In the Mid-Atlantic, little recruitment or higher densities of exploitable scallops indicated to the group that there were not likely candidates for either new closures or access areas next year. The PDT agreed that survey estimates in the Mid-Atlantic open bottom may be overly optimistic given the large amount of scallop harvest in that region that occurred during or after the surveys were completed. In the NGOM, the group agreed that the outlook was likely similar or slightly

declined relative to FY 2026, with lower densities of large scallops on Stellwagen Bank than in previous years. PDT members briefly discussed how removals in the time between the survey season and the following year projections were accounted for, with Dr. Hart explaining how she incorporated estimates of removals by SAMS area, but that better data on this would improve projection performance in cases like this where there are large removals from the open bottom.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund)** commented that the PDT should be able to better reconcile diverging survey estimates, such as the low dredge estimate in the NLS-S, and proposed the PDT's approach to modifying dredge efficiency and better accounting for estimated removals. Mr. Buckley responded that modifying dredge efficiency would not be appropriate in this case because the issue resulted from the allocation of survey stations in the dredge survey that happened to not directly sample the highest density patches in the area.

AGENDA ITEM 3: DEVELOP PDT INPUT ON SAMS AREA BOUNDARIES, INITIAL MODEL RUNS, MODEL PARAMETERS, AND UPDATE ON NEMATODE AND SHELL DISEASE PREVALENCE IN MID-ATLANTIC

Mr. Buckley solicited PDT feedback on SAMS area boundaries, initial model runs, and SAMS model parameters. Ms. Sally Roman from VIMS presented an update on nematode and shell disease prevalence in the Mid-Atlantic.

SAMS area boundaries

The PDT discussed the current SAMS area boundaries and whether there is a desire to change the boundaries for the SAMS model projections, especially the Nantucket Lightship area. Staff reminded the PDT on the Amendment 10 rotational management guidelines for when areas would close to fishing. There was a lengthy discussion on where to draw the SAMS area boundary within this Nantucket Lightship-South area to account for the higher biomass areas with larger scallops, allowing sufficient area for fishing, and minimizing overlap with the smaller scallops. One PDT member noted that the larger scallops tend to have a higher growth potential while the smaller scallops tend to grow slower, so perhaps it is better to harvest the smaller scallops now; she suggested delineating the area by 69.10° W longitude and consider a lottery system for access to the area to reduce incidental mortality. Another PDT member suggested shifting the line further west within the NLS-S while not modifying the NLS-N boundary as a way to better capture the slower growing scallops to the east while leaving a management boundary that was enforceable.

Overall, the three main options discussed for Nantucket Lightship-South included: keep as is, carve out extension, or move delineation line west to 69.10° W. The PDT tentatively recommended keeping the area delineation as is given this option represents the largest potential access area which would be beneficial for dispersing effort, is likely more easily enforced with straight lines, though protecting fewer smaller scallops. Moving the line to 69.10° W would result in a smaller area, would primarily include the high-density survey stations, and would isolate the extension. There was interest in better understanding estimated biomass between the different options and input from enforcement. Another member questioned whether the area should be kept closed to allow for additional growth and less high-grading; staff reminded the

group that the goal is to identify the SAMS are model runs to be able to look at biomass projections in the fall and not determine any potential access areas at this time. Another PDT member thought that limiting the size of the access area has not been successful for reducing impacts on the resource. It was also noted that prevailing currents in this area are from east to west.

A couple of PDT members suggested delaying any access to the area to May 15 or June 1 to maximize yield for additional growth and only opening a portion of the area next year and increasing the size of any access area in subsequent years. By only opening a portion of the area next year, the PDT would then be able to compare the impact of opening versus closed as part of next year's decision-making process. One PDT member was concerned that with many people accessing the area at the same time, shucking scallops within the area would essentially result in chumming for predators, adversely impacting next year's yield. This could be addressed by outreach efforts on best practices for fishing behavior and to not allow transit in the portion of the area that is closed to fishing.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz (CFF)** commented that he has experience in the Nantucket Lightship-South area and that enforcement cannot solely rely on VMS; people are apt to high grade and there is a need to limit time spent in this area. Active fishing creates mortality and there is mass mortality from towing too long; predators are attracted to the region which further exacerbates mortality. There is a desire to have a bigger access area and a limit on tow times and certain gear modifications as potential solutions. The PDT should focus on development of these other tools.
 - A few members of the PDT thought that limiting tow time could reduce high-grading and incidental mortality, but enforcement should be consulted and there is a need to consider how this impacts operational flexibility. It was not clear if there is a fleetwide mechanism to track active fishing time. Another member suggested requiring an observer similar to the redfish exemption program, though observer availability is likely a challenge and observers are not enforcement agents. Another PDT member suggested incentivizing fishermen to leave the access area as soon as possible by charging one-half an open area DAS so that additional DAS would be charged the longer fishing occurs.
- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** commented that perfection is not likely possible and that there will likely be high-grading and other fishery behaviors that are not ideal; having an access area trip is beneficial regardless.
- **Ron Smolowitz (CFF)** stated that prior to mandated access areas, vessels could opt out of the program and trade for open DAS, which would result in vessels having the option to fish elsewhere should landings per unit effort decrease too much.
- **Aubrey Church (Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance)** asked how the access (or closed) areas would be determined based on the discussion of SAMS areas today.
- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund)** reminded the PDT that harvesting scallops is a net benefit and it is not possible to create a perfect access area. He later commented that by having an area with multiple size classes, the largest scallops will be fished first.

- A couple of PDT members suggested either limiting trip time or possession limit to limit the incentive to high grade. Another PDT member pointed out that fishing induced mortality isn't instantaneous given the habitat is disrupted and scallops may die after being released.

Next steps:

- Re-calculate the biomass estimates for the two additional SAMS area configurations for the Nantucket Lightship-South area (Council staff to provide new SAMS area shapefiles); discuss the results via correspondence and make a PDT recommendation on specific SAMS area to move forward with (all)
- Consult Office of Law Enforcement on any options for limiting time in an access area using VMS (Keiley)

Nematode and shell disease prevalence in Mid-Atlantic

The PDT briefly discussed conducting surveys within offshore wind lease areas, noting that Orsted turbine locations are clearly documented, though the prevalence of fixed gear makes surveying the area challenging.

Public Comment:

- **Eric Hansen (Scallop Committee member)** asked what is causing the big declines in nematodes this year. Ms. Roman commented that this is likely due to several factors such as the colder winter and reduced fishing effort; she was not sure whether the reduction in disease was observed in the clam fishery, though Peter Hughes (a member of the Scallop AP) commented that disease has not been a topic discussed by the clam industry as far as he could recall.

SAMS Area Parameters, Initial Model Runs

The PDT discussed ideas for initial SAMS runs and ultimately recommended 24 DAS as a starting point with a 15k lb trip limit. This generally represents a similar level of effort as status quo. The PDT thought that an 18k lb trip limit was too high and that 30+ DAS is too many, especially with a resource in decline, no new recruitment anticipated into the fishery until at least 2029/2030, and anticipation that access area trips would be allocated in Nantucket Lightship-South for several years. One person suggested looking at the VMS data to approximate the percentage of DAS used in Georges Bank versus the Mid-Atlantic, for example.

The Scallop PDT discussed SAMS model parameters and made the following decisions:

- *Growth*: the growth in Nantucket Lightship-South appears slower than projected, which was a concern given this is a potential access area under consideration. One person commented that Nantucket Lightship-West is growing faster than the South area and that it would be possible to back-calculate the L infinity growth parameter to improve the estimate.
- *Natural mortality*: for Nantucket Lightship-South, the 0.27 natural mortality rate was based on 2023 data and there has been an increase in mortality observed in Georges Bank from sea star predation, which is not included in the 0.27 rate. The PDT discussed how to account for this increased predation in recent years, but due to the lack of quantitative

method available to adjust the rate, the PDT ultimately recommended keeping the 0.27 rate and conducting a sensitivity analysis with a 0.4 natural mortality rate. One person suggested determining the natural mortality rate to achieve the biomass projection from last year closer to the realized value this year as a starting point, though this is likely to create too much noise in the model.

- *Selectivity*: use the Georges Bank open selectivity curve for the Nantucket Lightship-South area given there are a greater number of smaller sized scallops that should be better accounted for in this region and there isn't a selectivity curve specifically developed for Nantucket Lightship-South. In the Mid-Atlantic region, many scallops were discarded, especially large scallops, potentially due to disease in 2025. In the Southern Flank, a high percentage of smaller scallops are being discarded, though it was noted that the total number of discarded scallops should be evaluated to help understand why. One hypothesis was that fishermen are encountering hotspot areas with these smaller scallops.
- *Landings per unit effort (LPUE)*: no adjustments this year given it is anticipated that realized and observed estimates of LPUE are likely to be similar by the end of the fishing year, given there is a seasonal fishing effect. In prior years, it is likely that LPUE was over-corrected and that unfished year classes tend to be more concentrated and lead to higher LPUE estimates relative to depleted conditions; this occurred in the Mid-Atlantic region last year.

One PDT member asked whether it was possible to separate out biomass estimates for the NGOM region, specifically Jeffreys Ledge, Platts Bank, and Machias Seal Island, instead of combining biomass estimates for all three areas of interest. This is likely to create a lot of noise in the data and there does not appear to be a specific management reason to do so; the PDT decided to separate estimated biomass for Jeffreys Ledge and combine Ipswich area with Platts Bank and Machias Seal Island.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz (CFF)** commented that there is a higher catch rate especially of under-sized market scallops, resulting in higher discarding. He also stated that many scallops in the Nantucket Lightship-South are within the 80-100 mm range.

Next steps:

- Reestimate the growth parameter for Nantucket Lightship-South (Hart)
- Confirm the natural mortality rates for Elephant Trunk and Delmarva regions (Buckley)
- SAMS runs: OFL/ABC projections for September 18th, and Committee-tasked projections by October 13th. Include a sensitivity SAMS run using $M=0.4$ for Georges Bank SAMS areas for the preferred alternative (Hart)

AGENDA ITEM 4: FRAMEWORK 42 MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Council staff discussed the development of measures to allocate regional DAS, sub-management areas in the NGOM, and potential changes to NGOM in-shell possession limits.

Discussion

Regional DAS: The PDT recommended:

- Exchanging regional DAS in equal increments and allow fractional values. This is the simplest option and allowing trading without restriction may have unintended consequences;
- No DAS trading cap on the proportion of a vessel's DAS that could be exchanged. The PDT briefly discussed if the volume of trades could create complications for NOAA to administer, though trading is expected to occur via FishOnline, an automated system, so volume of trades should not be a concern;
- In-season trading, similar to current access area trips using FishOnline. The PDT thought this is consistent with the spirit of regional DAS and would enable operational flexibility; and
- DAS carryover permitted based on proportional split, which would be based on future allocation of effort in the upcoming fishing year. If vessels have over 10 DAS remaining (the carryover cap), the number and split of regional DAS would be reset such that the carryover would be determined based on the future effort allocation in the upcoming fishing year.

Sub-management areas in the NGOM: The PDT recommended:

- No transit corridor between sub-management areas based on input from Office of Law Enforcement;
- Simultaneous opening of the areas, based on the assumption that separate vessel monitoring system (VMS) codes would be developed so simultaneous opening could be monitored and enforced. This could potentially help spread out fishing effort, which was the impetus of this management measure, though would not explicitly address vessel over-crowding in high scallop density areas. Vessel over-crowding is likely to occur regardless, though enabling simultaneous access (versus subsequent access), vessels would have a greater area to fish; and
- Status quo accountability measure, which is consistent with other scallop management measures.

NGOM in-shell possession limit: The PDT discussed current regulations for in-shell possession limit: inside the demarcation line, there is a 200 lb limit of shucked meats or 1,666 in-shell possession limit and outside the demarcation line seaward, there is an overall 3,332 lb possession limit, which could mean 200 lb shucked meats plus over 3,000 lb in-shell possession limit could be permitted under the assumption that fishermen are still loading up the deck and in the process of shucking scallops. A few members were interested in clarifying the regulations inside the demarcation line with respect to transiting and not being allowed to have a pile of scallops on deck. The seaward regulation likely needs some modification to make clear the intention that only 200 lb of shucked scallops (or equivalent of in-shell scallops) are allowed when leaving the NGOM area, though the PDT wanted input from the AP first before suggesting any specific regulatory changes.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalping Fund)** referenced [Scallop Amendment 10](#) and the overall goal to enable limited access vessels to access the NGOM area once the 800,000 lb threshold is achieved (a set-aside trigger for the NGOM directed fishery whereby allocation above the trigger will be split 5% for the NGOM fleet and 95% for

limited access and LAGC IFQ fleets). He asked how this goal is being addressed through FW42 and specifically through regional DAS allocations

Next steps:

- Revise the draft Framework 42 Discussion Document to reflect PDT input and recommendations on management measures (Buckley/Couture)
- Seek AP and Committee input on any potential changes to the NGOM in-shell possession limit and which management measures to continue to develop (Buckley/Couture)

AGENDA ITEM #5: SCALLOP PDT MEMO TO GROUND FISH PDT RE: GEORGES BANK YELLOWTAIL FLOUNDER

Council staff reviewed the draft Scallop PDT memo to the Groundfish PDT regarding Georges Bank Yellowtail flounder catch in the scallop fishery. The memo outlines recent management measures within the Georges Bank yellowtail stock area, catch estimates of Georges Bank yellowtail, recent scallop fishing effort within the stock area, and outlook for the scallop fishery and Georges Bank yellowtail bycatch on eastern Georges Bank in FY 2027.

Discussion:

GARFO staff alerted the PDT that given the timing of the Northeast Multispecies Framework 69, the northern windowpane flounder accountability measure was not implemented. Framework 69 modified the accountability measure for northern windowpane so that it is only implemented if the sub-ACL and the total ACL are exceeded; this did not occur in fishing year 2024 so an accountability measure was not in place in the scallop fishery in fishing year 2025.

Next steps:

- Revise the draft Scallop PDT yellowtail flounder memo to the Groundfish PDT (Buckley/Couture)

AGENDA ITEM #6: SCALLOP WORK PLAN

Mr. Buckley reviewed the Scallop Strategic Plan, including the recent fishery performance and scallop research, and asked the PDT for input on a draft three-year Scallop Work Plan. He asked the PDT for the work items that are ready for Council action, and which need additional research or analysis. The three-year work plan will serve as the basis for AP and Committee recommendations for 2027 priorities to be discussed during the September 9th and 10th AP and Committee meetings, respectively.

Discussion:

2027 draft priorities: a couple of PDT members were interested in helping develop a white paper on improving fishing behaviors (e.g., high-grading) which will be particularly important for the Nantucket Lightship area, should it be opened in the near future. A joint PDT/AP working group was suggested for this task. One person asked about the timing of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for RSA projects, specifically the scallop surveys; this is scheduled for next year.

2028 draft priorities: regarding the review of Automated Detection technology for use in scallop surveys, there was a discussion on the recent NOAA workshop for AI and potentially interest in having the review be done by members of other NOAA Science Centers, the Council's SSC, and folks involved in computer vision. The review would entail development of standards for how well AI performs, how to navigate errors to avoid bias, and incorporation of new data into a training dataset. There was interest in doing this review in 2027.

Regarding the proposed Council-led workshops on improving scallop fishing practices, the PDT wanted to first see the outcomes from the white paper that would be developed in 2027 before determining whether a workshop would be needed or not. A couple of PDT members thought doing outreach with the AP and during the Maine Fishermen's Forum could be better avenues.

Regarding a framework to adjust in-season, reactive management triggers, the PDT thought this work was management-ready.

2029 draft priorities: The Scallop PDT discussed a priority that would clearly document how management decision-making is done (such as with a decision tree) versus reliance on institutional knowledge from people involved in the management process. This idea could be further developed in 2028 and then executed in 2029. The PDT recommended adding in the timing for the next assessment and include the assessment type (analytical vs data update), when that information becomes available. Regarding the scallop enhancement set-aside, there was a workshop a couple of years ago on this topic and a current VIMS project on surf clam and scallop enhancement, which should be completed within three years. The PDT was interested in using this project report to define the scope of any future management action.

Next steps:

- Revise the draft three-year work plan to reflect PDT input (Buckley/Couture)

AGENDA ITEM #7: OTHER BUSINESS

Council staff presented an overview of upcoming meetings and decision points regarding the specifications setting and Framework 42 actions. The PDT decided the tentative August 31st meeting is no longer needed. An important meeting to note is the Scallop PDT and AP meeting on September 9th and Scallop Committee meeting on September 10th to review the PDT recommendations for rotational management options, identify SAMS run options to be considered, determine the scope of FW42, and finalize the Scallop three-year work plan for Council consideration.

Discussion:

One PDT member asked about the timing of the Research Set-Aside Share day, which will be held in March again next year.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned around 4:40 pm on August 26th and 1:30 pm on August 27th.