

Amendment 21 Discussion Document

OVERVIEW:

This brief document summarizes the range of alternatives that are included in Amendment 21. The intent is to summarize key parts of some measures in each action, and highlight any potential modifications to the current range of options.

COUNCIL ACTION:

- Review draft alternatives document and recommend any additional modifications before approving the range of alternatives that will be considered in Amendment 21.

OVERVIEW AND UPDATES TO THE DRAFT AMENDMENT 21 ALTERNATIVES:

Action 1: 4.1 – Northern Gulf of Maine Catch Limits

1. This section focuses on how the NGOM area is accounted for relative to the legal limits of the scallop fishery (OFL and ABC). It is organized into two alternatives. The decision on how scallop biomass in the NGOM is accounted for relative to the OFL and ABC is an entirely separate process from Action 2, NGOM allocations.

Action 2: 4.2 – Northern Gulf of Maine Allocations

2. This section focuses on 1): how to formally allocate to LAGC NGOM, LAGC IFQ, and the LA components. In Alternative 2, the Committee has developed an approach that would set-aside the initial portion of the NGOM allocation for LAGC fishing, with allocation above a trigger shared between the NGOM set-aside a NGOM APL that is shared between the LAGC IFQ and LA.
3. There are two key decision points imbedded within each allocation option under Alt. 2:
 - a. At what level of exploitable biomass in open areas of the NGOM (i.e., the trigger) should the NGOM allocation be allocated to the LA and LAGC IFQ as NGOM APL?
 - b. How should the allocation above the trigger be shared between the NGOM Set-Aside and the LA and LAGC IFQ components?
4. There are currently six allocation triggers (Options 4.2.2.1 – 4.2.2.6) that range from 1 million pounds to 200,000 pounds. Each trigger option includes an approach for sharing the NGOM allocation over the trigger.
 - a. The Council may wish to consider reducing the number of options in this section. One approach could be to include the high and low trigger value associated with each sharing approach over the trigger.
5. Council staff have included rationale for each of the 6 allocation options. The rationale for each option is tied to the vision for the LAGC component and the goals and objectives for the Northern Gulf of Maine in this action. Based on the current rationale, the Scallop PDT would focus, in part, on the following criteria for comparing these options:
 - a. Ability for permit categories (LAGC NGOM, LAGC IFQ, LA) to access the NGOM management are at different levels of exploitable biomass.
 - b. How a NGOM Set-Aside could support for a growing scallop fishery in terms of 1) additional active vessels; 2) ability for existing active vessels to expand participation in terms of landings, length of season, etc.

- c. The scallop landings from the NGOM relative to allocations from the Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic.

Action 3: 4.3 - Monitoring Directed Scallop Fishing in the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area

6. There are three alternatives in Action 3. Staff do not anticipate a need for further updates.

Action 4 – 4.4 - Support Scallop Research using Scallops from the Northern Gulf of Maine

7. The alternatives in this section focus on supporting scallop research (RSA) using scallops from the Northern Gulf of Maine.
8. Council staff recommend trying to reduce the number of alternatives and sub-options in this section to reduce the overall number of measures in Amendment 21. There was very little discussion on Alternative 2 at the Advisory Panel and Committee meetings. The Council can adjust the allocation for RSA in a future framework.

Action 5 – 4.5 Northern Gulf of Maine Fishing Season

9. There are four alternatives in this section. Staff do not anticipate a need for further updates.

Action 6 – 4.6 – Cumulative Maximum Dredge Width that can be fishing in the NGOM Management Area

10. There are three alternatives in Action 6. The rationale for Alternative 2 and 3 were updated based on Committee and PDT discussion in recent weeks. Please review.

Action 7 – 4.7 - Increase the LAGC IFQ possession limit

11. The range of alternatives in Action 7 would increase the possession limit to 800 pounds (Alt. 2), 1,000 pounds (Alt. 3), or 1,200 pounds (Alternative 4).
12. There are two sub-options for each alternative. Sub-Option 1 would increase the possession limit for all LAGC IFQ trips (i.e. open and access area trips) and Sub-Option 2 would increase the possession limit for only access area trips.

Action 8 – 4.8 – Increase the Amount of observer compensation available for LAGC IFQ vessels

13. These alternatives are meant to compliment potentially longer LAGC IFQ trips if the Council elects to increase the LAGC IFQ possession limit through this action. Staff do not anticipate a need for further updates.

Action 9 – 4.9 – One Way Transfer of Quota from LA with IFQ to LAGC IFQ only

14. The range of alternatives include allowing temporary transfers of quota from LA with IFQ to LAGC IFQ-only permits (Alt. 2), or allowing permanent and temporary transfers of quota from LA with IFQ to LAGC IFQ-only permits (Alt. 3).
15. There are two sub-options to consider for each of these alternatives related to quota accumulation caps in the LAGC IFQ fishery.

Action 10 – 4.10 – Expand the list of measures that can be addressed through specifications and/or framework adjustments

16. Council and GARFO staff discussed the list measure that the Committee developed. Staff think that the range of issues that has been identified could be done under the existing authority under Section 648.55(f) of Atlantic Sea Scallop regulations and 648.11(g) Industry-funded monitoring programs.

17. Staff recommend keeping this alternative in the document for several reasons: Identifying a list of changes that may be made to the FMP in subsequent specification packages or framework adjustments would give the Council flexibility to address specific issues without initiating an amendment to the FMP. In the past, there has been confusion about what changes could be made to the management of the NGOM through a framework or specifications action. This list is intended to capture the range of issues discussed during the development of Amendment 21 that could be taken up in a later action but is not intended to limit the range of issues that could be addressed under existing regulatory authority.
18. In terms of analyses, this is primarily an administrative action that would not require substantial resources to complete.