

Scallop Framework 42 Discussion Document - DRAFT

Scallop AP / Committee Meeting Draft

September 9-10, 2026

Background

Development of regional Limited Access Day-at-Sea (DAS) allocations, including consideration of DAS carryover provisions, and the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) sub-management areas were approved by the Council for development in 2026 to be included in Framework 42. In June, the Council voted to develop a separate action to set specifications for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default).

To address these priorities, the Scallop PDT convened on February 26, April 7, July 29, August 17, and August 26-27 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 ([AP meeting summary](#); [Committee meeting summary](#)). The Scallop AP will meet jointly with the PDT on September 9th and the Committee will meet on September 10th to discuss both FW42 and the specifications actions.

Regional Limited Access DAS allocations

Under the current fishery management plan, 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 landings per unit effort (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,

), and in 2023, overfishing occurred on Georges Bank ([August 19, 2025 Scallop PDT Memo to the SSC](#)).

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

PDT input: Framework 42 needs to include specific details on how a Regional DAS program would work so that NOAA Fisheries can develop the necessary program and accounting before possible implementation beginning in FY 2028. The PDT made the following recommendations during its 8/26-8/27 meeting:

- *DAS Trading*: Vessels must exchange DAS in equal increments, with fractional values permitted
- *DAS trade cap*: There would be no cap on the proportion of a vessel's DAS that could be exchanged (e.g. a vessel could exchange all of their MA DAS for GB DAS)
- *Timing of DAS trading*: Trading in-season would be permitted, similar to access area trips via FishOnline.
- *DAS carryover*: A Limited Access vessel's remaining open-bottom DAS would be apportioned using the ratio of Mid-Atlantic to Georges Bank DAS used to set the following year's specifications. For example, a vessel that was allocated 15 Georges Bank DAS and 10 Mid-Atlantic DAS would have their 10 carryover DAS apportioned so that they could fish 6 Georges Bank DAS and 4 Mid-Atlantic DAS.

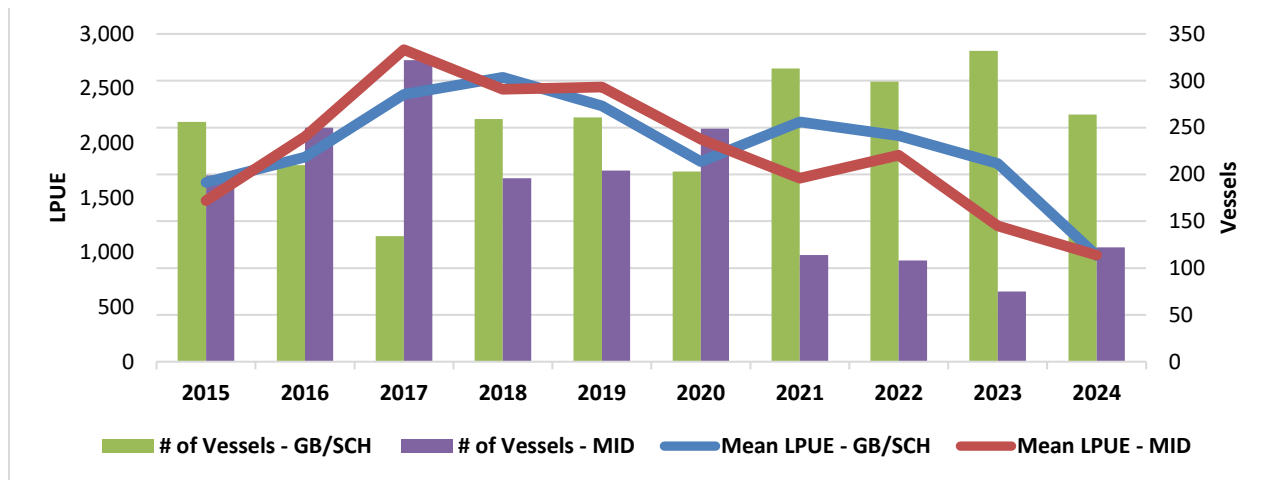
Scallop AP Recommendations: The AP was divided on the benefits of regional DAS allocations relative to the reduced vessel operational flexibility. While several AP members did not support further development, others preferred to continue development for implementation in FY2028 when support for trading of DAS between vessels and regions would be available. Some members of the AP and industry also recommended: evaluating alternatives to understand fleet responses, a simple approach to any Regional DAS program, reconsidering the approach once stock projection methods are complete, and implementing the tool in the future if conditions warrant its use. 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 for Concept 1 while delaying implementation until necessary administrative/trading mechanisms are available. The Committee did not recommend differential DAS counting (specifying a ratio to adjust DAS charges to increase or decrease realized effort in a region) and did not support reducing DAS carryover. Limited Access vessels would be allocated Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank DAS, delineated by the 71°W 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} . 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, FY2023 – FY2026 (April – July).

Region	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026 (Apr – Jul)
GB – Open	73,079 hours (70%)	112,464 hours (78%)	84,285 hours (62%)	30,415 hours (33%)
MA – Open	7,069 hours (30%)	31,240 hours (22%)	77,900 hours (38%)	62,324 hours (67%)
Total - Open	80,148 hours	143,704 hours	162,185 hours	92,739 hours
GB – Access	37,544 hours	59,963 hours (55%)	111,935 hours	13,594 hours
MA – Access	0 hours	49,813 hours (45%)	0 hours	0 hours
Total – Access	37,544 hours	109,776 hours	111,935 hours	13,594 hours
Georges Bank	110,633 hours (77%)	172,427 hours (68%)	191,696 hours (74%)	35,946 hours (37%)
Mid-Atlantic	7,069 hours (23%)	81,053 hours (32%)	67,575 hours (25%)	62,324 hours (63%)
Grand Total	117,702 hours	253,480 hours	259,271 hours	98,270 hours

Figure 1. LPUE and active scallop vessels between the Mid-Atlantic (MA) and Georges Bank (GB)/South Channel (SCH), FY2015 – 2024.



Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) 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. While high fishing mortality on Stellwagen Bank has led to local declines in adult scallop biomass, recruitment is likely substantially buffered by the nearby Western Gulf of Maine (WGOM) closure, which supports approximately 65% of the scallop biomass in the NGOM. Establishing sub-management areas 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), providing greater stability in catch rates in future years. 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. The PDT notes that this measure would not explicitly address vessel over-crowding in the NGOM, and dependent on scallop catch rates in both NGOM sub-areas and the open bottom could still occur.

The development of sub-management areas within the NGOM could allow the Council to set a fishing mortality rate in each sub-management area 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 NGOM-South were to be closed ($F=0$), then the Council would be limited to setting a TAL for NGOM-North 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 equally split between the two areas.

PDT input: The PDT made the following recommendations during its 8/26-8/27 meeting:

- *Area boundaries:* NGOM-South and NGOM-North bounded by the $41^{\circ}15'N$ line (Figure 4) (i.e., no transit corridor)

- *Timing of sub-management area openings*: Both sub-areas open simultaneously on April 1
- *Accountability measures*: No Action – Maintain current NGOM accountability measure (PDT recommendation)
- *NGOM in-shell possession limits*: TBD based on input from the AP
 - o *Inside demarcation line*: maintain the current possession limits of 200 lb of shucked meats and no more than 1,666 lb of in-shell scallops but clarify the regulations for transiting and that the in-shell possession limit is not in addition to the 200 lb possession limit..
 - o *Outside demarcation line*: clarify the intention that only 200 lb of shucked scallops (or equivalent of in-shell scallops) are allowed when leaving the NGOM area

Scallop AP recommendations: The Scallop AP did not support further development of NGOM sub-management areas (i.e., keep as a single management area), however, several AP members provided input that making any sub-management areas available at the same time would have a greater positive impact on spreading out the fleet’s effort. The AP also recommended evaluating how recent fishing seasons would have unfolded under various sub-management area scenarios to better understand potential fleet responses. 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 behavior and practices (high grading and deck loading), given these issues are a larger problem for the sustainability of the NGOM fishery.

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 (**Error! Reference source not found.**) and included options for both consecutive and concurrent access. The Committee was uncertain how concurrent access to multiple sub-management areas would differ substantially from the current fishery (No Action). The Committee additionally tasked the Scallop PDT evaluating potential modifications to NGOM possession limits, including combinations of in-shell and shucked meats, as part of these measures.

1.0 DRAFT FRAMEWORK 42 ALTERNATIVES

1.1 ACTION 1 – REGIONAL DAY-AT-SEA MANAGEMENT

1.1.1 Establish regional boundaries for Scallop Day-at-Sea allocations

1.1.1.1 **DRAFT** Alternative 1 – No Action

Under Alternative 1, there would be no change in where Scallop DAS are allocated (e.g., Scallop DAS are not allocated to a specific region).

Rationale: Maintaining non-region-specific Scallop DAS would maximize vessel operational flexibility, ensuring that Limited Access scallop vessels are able to focus fishing operations on the areas that are most economical.

Potential drawbacks include not directly reducing the risk of regional overfishing when there are large differences in LPUE, resulting in disproportionate fishing effort in one region.

1.1.1.2 DRAFT Alternative 2 – Regional Day-at-Sea (DAS) Allocations

Alternative 2 would create separate DAS for the Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic regions as a future management tool, delineated by the 71°W boundary line Figure 1. Allocation of a set number of days east and west of the 71°W boundary would occur in future specifications actions; this alternative would create a one-time structural change and the option to allocate DAS separately by region in the future. Limited Access scallop vessels fishing on a regional DAS would be prohibited from crossing the 71°W boundary while on a declared Scallop DAS.

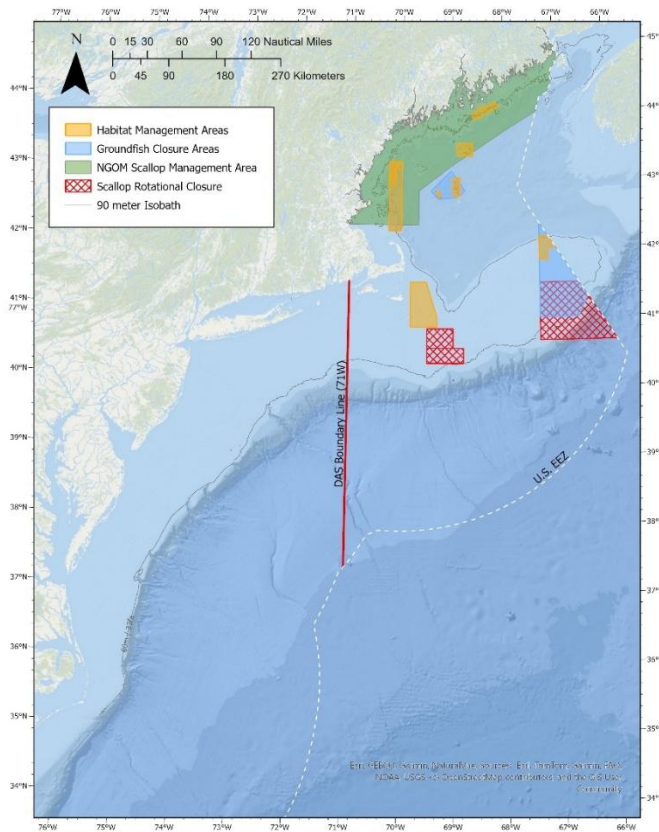
Under Alternative 2, Limited Access scallop vessels would be permitted to exchange regional DAS between vessels, but the ratio of DAS exchanges would be limited to a maximum 1:1 DAS. There would be no cap on the proportion of a vessel's allocated DAS that could be traded (e.g. a vessel could exchange all of their Mid-Atlantic DAS for an equal number of Georges Bank DAS). Exchanges of scallop DAS between regions would allow for scallop vessels to adjust their DAS allocations, increasing vessel operational flexibility. Limiting DAS exchanges to 1 DAS:1 DAS will maintain each Limited Access vessel's aggregate DAS allocation and prevent gains in efficiency from stacking more DAS on a single vessel than were originally allocated.

Under Alternative 2, scallop DAS that are carried over to the next fishing year would be apportioned between regions by the proportional split specified in the fishing year they would be used. If non-regional DAS are allocated in the upcoming fishing year, carryover DAS would be converted to non-regional DAS up to the maximum number of carryover DAS. The maximum number of unused open area DAS that could be carried over into the next fishing year would remain unchanged (i.e. 10 DAS).

Rationale: Regional DAS allocation would reduce the risk of regional overfishing when large differences in LPUE result in disproportionate fishing effort in one region. Since 2021, much of the fleet's effort has been concentrated on Georges Bank, and the 2025 stock assessment concluded that overfishing occurred on Georges Bank in 2023. By establishing the necessary administrative and regulatory mechanisms through this action, such as VMS coding and DAS exchange capabilities, the tool would be available if needed in the future.

Potential drawbacks include added management complexity creating challenges for administration, monitoring, and enforcement; lack of clarity on how regional DAS allocations could be used to address concerns about localized overfishing; reduction in fleet flexibility, forcing vessels into areas where fishing conditions are poor (note, fishing is based on a variety of factors including price, meat quality, nematodes, water temperature, timing of fishing year); unintended consequences creating inequity, contributing to high-grading, or further concentration of fishing effort; survey information used to support regional allocations may be outdated by the time specifications are determined; uncertainty whether regional DAS would address fishery concerns.

Figure 2. 71 °W is the proposed boundary line to delineate Mid-Atlantic from Georges Bank Days-at-Sea.



1.2 ACTION 2 – NORTHERN GULF OF MAINE MANAGEMENT

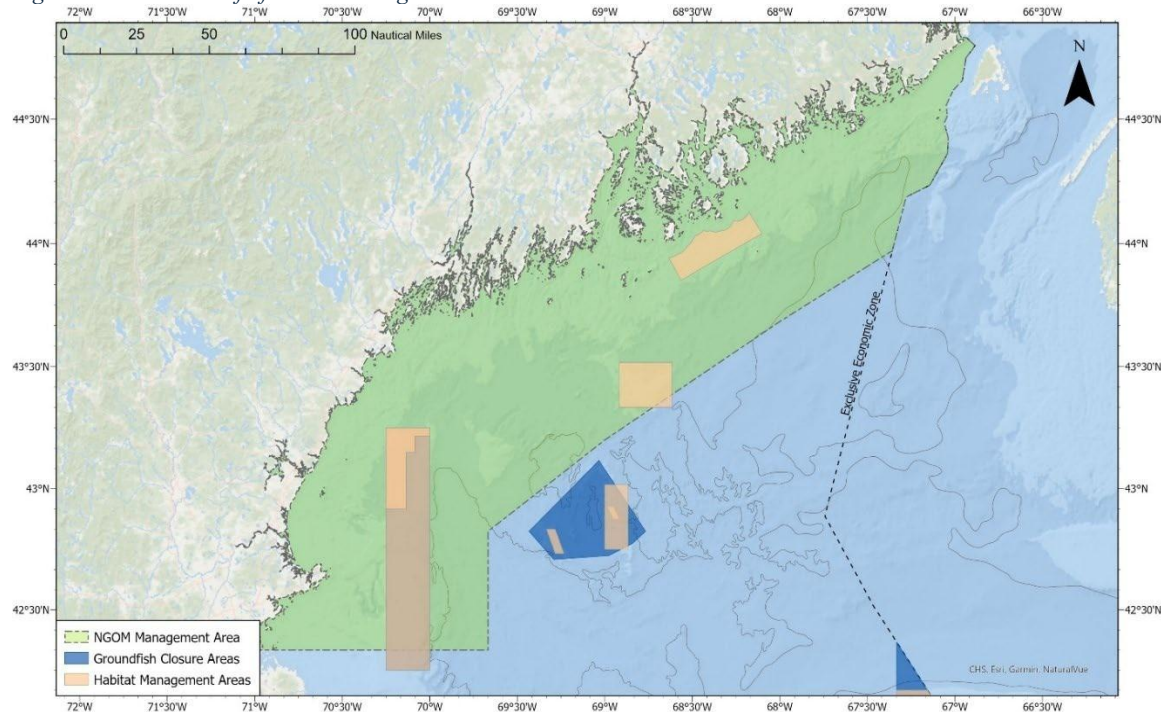
1.2.1 Establish sub-management areas in the Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Management Area

1.2.1.1 **DRAFT** Alternative 1 – No Action

Under Alternative 1, there would be no change to the Northern Gulf of Maine management area. The current NGOM Total Allowable Landings (TAL) is based on total exploitable biomass across the management area and a single fishing mortality target, while realized fishing mortality may be higher in one part of NGOM relative to another area.

Rationale: Maintaining NGOM as one area would not further sub-divide the area, leading to greater vessel operational flexibility. This simpler management approach would continue to enable the fishery to largely govern itself through fleet behavior. Concentration of fishing effort on Stellwagen Bank would not be directly addressed under this alternative but may be indirectly addressed through changing scallop resource conditions. For example, recent declines in exploitable biomass on Stellwagen Bank may lead to greater homogeneity in LPUE across the NGOM scallop resource, which would be expected to disperse the scallop fleet across the management area.

Figure 3. Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area.



1.2.1.2 **DRAFT** Alternative 2 – Establish Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas

Alternative 2 would create two Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas, NGOM-North and NGOM-South, divided by the 41°15'N. The proportion of the NGOM Set-Aside allocated to each sub-management area would be defined so that the aggregate fishing mortality rate of the NGOM scallop management area is between $F=0.15$ and $F=0.25$. This alternative would create a one-time structural change and the option to allocate effort across two sub-management areas in the future but does not set fishery specifications for either area.

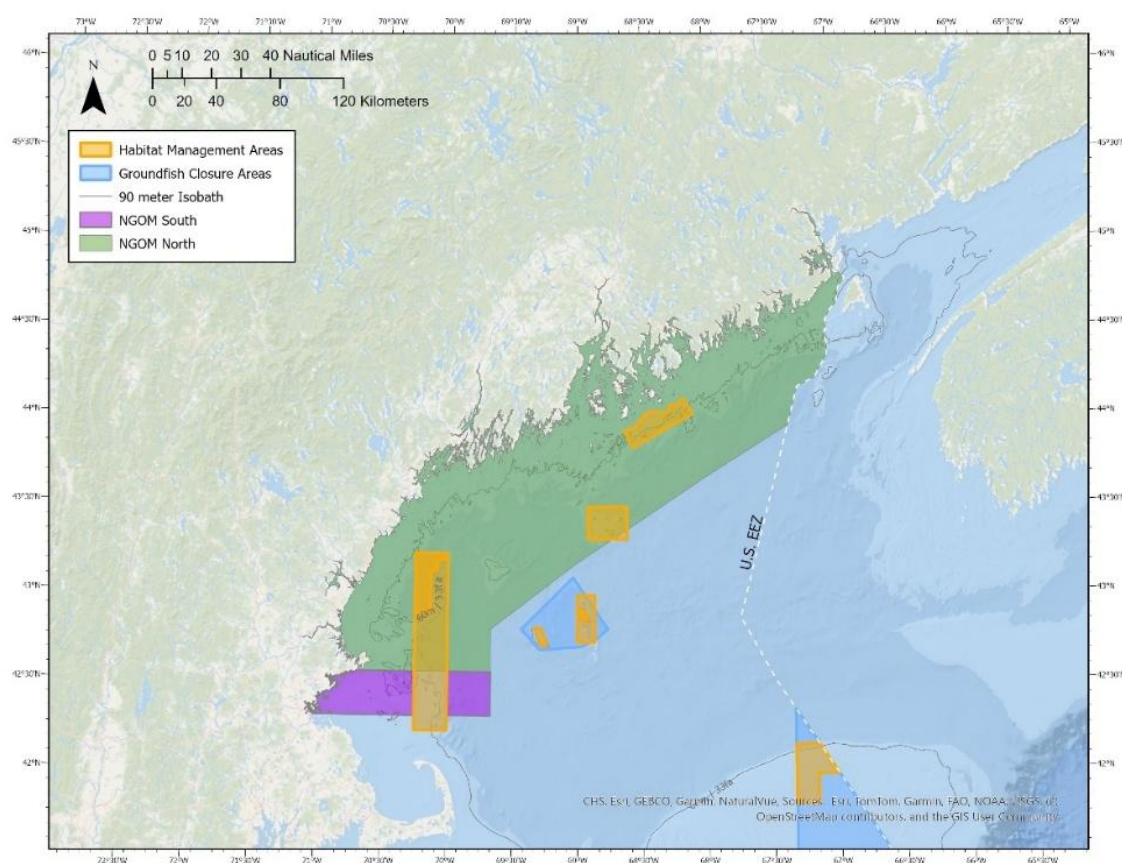
The NGOM accountability measure (pound-for-pound payback) would be specific to each sub-management area. 0.5% of the NGOM ABC would be set-aside from each sub-management area for observer coverage, and 12,500 lbs. would be set-aside from each sub-management area for research.

Rationale: The development of sub-management areas within the NGOM would be an additional tool to reduce fishing pressure on Stellwagen Bank and encourage effort on other banks and ledges that contain substantial scallop biomass but generally support lower catch rates. The sub-management areas could also allow the Council to set a fishing mortality rate in each area independently to help account for differences in higher realized fishing mortality on Stellwagen, for example, relative to the rest of NGOM. The aggregate fishing mortality rate used to set the NGOM TAL would still be limited between $F=0.15$ and $F=0.25$, however. Under the current regulations, if the 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 $F=0.25$. Alternative 2 would therefore help prevent exceeding the removal of legal biomass/fishing mortality rate in a given sub-management area. Deductions for observer coverage and research set-aside would be equally split between the two sub-management areas.

Potential benefits of sub-management areas include reducing vessel crowding on Stellwagen, distributing fishing effort more broadly, and extending the duration of the fishing season. Potential drawbacks of sub-management areas include the added management complexity; the challenge of additional monitoring and enforcement, though NOAA indicated sub-management areas could be supported operationally; and may not achieve the stated objective of reducing vessel crowding if the difference in LPUE between the two sub-management areas is too large.

Figure 4. Alternative 2, NGOM North and NGOM South without a corresponding transit corridor.



1.2.2 Timing of Access in NGOM Sub-Management Areas

1.2.2.1 **DRAFT** Alternative 1 – Concurrent Access

Under Alternative 1, both sub-management areas would open simultaneously.

Rationale: Simultaneous access would provide additional flexibility and could naturally distribute fishing effort. Multiple VMS codes would be required to support and differentiate between the two sub-management areas. This option would also be a more complex spatial

management structure. The fishing season could potentially be extended if effort is distributed across the two sub-management areas versus concentrated on Stellwagen Bank early in the fishing year.

Concurrent access would be harder for NOAA Office of Law Enforcement to enforce, especially if vessels were allowed to transit through closed areas, relative to sequential access; enforcement is still possible, though more complex.

1.2.2.2 DRAFT Alternative 2 – NGOM-North open on April 1, NGOM-South opens after NGOM-North is closed or on April 15, whichever is earlier.

Under Alternative 2, NGOM-North would be open for declared NGOM scallop trips on April 1, and NGOM-South would open once the NGOM-North Set-Aside has been harvested. Once the NGOM-South Set-Aside has been harvested, that sub-area would also close.

Rationale: Sequential access would help distribute effort spatially and would be easier to implement, monitor, and enforce. The fishing season could potentially be extended if effort is distributed across the two sub-management areas versus concentrated on Stellwagen Bank early in the fishing year. Setting the sub areas to open on fixed dates as backstop would allow vessels a greater opportunity to plan fishing operations around the opening dates.

1.2.2.3 DRAFT Alternative 3 – NGOM-South opens on April 1, NGOM-North opens after NGOM-South is closed or on April 15, whichever is earlier.

Under Alternative 3, NGOM-South would be open for declared NGOM scallop trips on April 1, and NGOM-North would open once the NGOM-South Set-Aside has been harvested, or on April 15th, whichever is earlier. Once the NGOM-North Set-Aside has been harvested, that sub-area would also close.

Rationale: Sequential access would help distribute effort spatially and would be easier to implement, monitor, and enforce. The fishing season could potentially be extended if effort is distributed across the two sub-management areas versus concentrated on Stellwagen Bank early in the fishing year. Setting the sub areas to open on fixed dates as backstop would allow vessels a greater opportunity to plan fishing operations around the opening dates.