



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

Webinar

October 9, 2025

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) met on October 9th, 2025 at 9:30AM via webinar to: 1) discuss issues related to the development of Framework Adjustment 40, including specifications and 2025/2026 fishery projections; 2) address Scallop Committee tasking from September 15, 2025 meeting.; 3) discuss other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; ME DMR: Carl Huntsberger; VIMS: Dr. David Rudders; College of William and Mary: Dr. William DuPaul; MA DMF: Kelly Whitmore; RI DEM: Chris Parkins

Also present were Scallop Committee members Melanie Griffin (Chair) and Melissa Smith, along with 7 members of the public.

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES

The PDT began with a review of the agenda and updates on current work items. Council staff explained that issues with the 2025 survey data have delayed the production of final combined survey estimates. As a result, initial projections have been postponed and instead the PDT will focus on addressing known issues with the data and its treatment before generating new model runs.

Council staff also provided an update on the 2026 OFL and ABC recommendations following review by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The SSC agreed that all PDT-recommended modifications were reasonable and supported Option 1 for the OFL and ABC approach. However, the SSC noted that additional statistical justification and documentation will be needed to support the analysis and recommended that future PDT work clearly outline the basis for parameter choices and model assumptions.

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRAMEWORK 40

Council staff noted that the ongoing government shutdown presents an additional challenge to addressing the Committee's tasking for Framework 40. Because SAMS work has been suspended, additional model runs are unlikely to be completed. The most recent analyses and available information will be used to stay on schedule. Staff hope to avoid delays that could push final action to January 2026, as late implementation could negatively affect Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) management.

A PDT member asked whether, given these delays, there is a point at which it would no longer be practical to put a framework in place. Council staff replied that this possibility has been discussed and confirmed that there would be a point where not moving forward with the framework could occur, though this would be a last resort.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalping Fund)** emphasized the importance of moving forward with a framework, noting that delaying implementation could create hardship for the fleet. Mr. Minkiewicz added that while the fleet can manage under the current 18-day carry-over at the start of the year, vessels ultimately depend on the full allocation to maintain operations. Council staff agreed, stating that efforts to complete the framework are ongoing and that postponing it would be considered only as a last resort.

Projected Length Frequencies and Exploitable Biomass

Georges Bank

Staff presented survey results showing continued variability in recruitment and limited exploitable biomass across Georges Bank. On the Northern Flank (NF), densities ranged from 0.8 to 6.9 pre-recruits per m² across five stations, with a single year class dominating and little exploitable biomass. On the Southern Flank (SF), densities were higher, showing 2.3 pre-recruits per m², 98.1 recruits per m², and 7.9 recruited scallops per m², with multiple cohorts present over a smaller area.

The PDT discussed whether to recommend additional analysis or a closure on the NF. One PDT member stated that current data do not justify new closures, as these areas would likely not support rotational fishing even if protected. Council staff agreed, noting that protecting areas without clear recruitment potential would move away from the objectives of rotational management. It was added that new in-season management authority under the Omnibus amendment could allow adaptive actions as information becomes available. Another PDT member said that while protecting small scallops would be ideal, current ring sizes already provide some level of protection and effort in either area is expected to be limited.

In the Great South Channel (GSC) and Area I Sliver, one PDT member noted that a 12,000-pound trip could remove roughly two-thirds of the biomass and suggested that a smaller trip limit, such as 6,000 pounds, would be more realistic. Another PDT member recalled that poor meat quality and high discard rates in 2012–2013 led to significant waste during closed-area trips and said that this history should be considered when comparing open versus closed-area management. Council staff agreed that uncertainty around meat quality and natural mortality warrants caution and expressed a preference for maintaining these areas as open bottom rather than designated access areas. A PDT member added that while open-bottom fishing offers flexibility, the impacts of spatial configurations that lack rotational fishing should be analyzed to understand potential long-term effects on effort distribution.

The PDT also reviewed the Nantucket Lightship (NLS) and Area II. A PDT member supported closure of the southern portion of Area II, noting that the Extension still holds exploitable biomass. In Closed Area II (HAPC), Council staff expressed surprise at the survey results and suggested that many animals previously observed were likely pre-recruits captured by optical surveys but missed in dredge sampling.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz**, on the GSC and Sliver, agreed that removing two-thirds of exploitable biomass would be unrealistic and likely overestimates the resource. He added that natural mortality may be higher than currently estimated and that open-bottom management would better support both the stock and the fleet. On Closed Area II, he urged caution where discrepancies exist between dredge and optical survey results, citing the importance of accounting for past inconsistencies. Council staff acknowledged the concern and said the PDT had reviewed data coverage to ensure no major gaps remained.

Mid-Atlantic

The PDT then discussed survey findings from the Long Island (LI), Block Island (BI), and New York Bight (NYB) regions. A PDT member observed that the model continues to perform poorly in representing growth in the NYB and noted that 2025 survey data showed few animals there. They said that despite this, survey data and industry feedback make a compelling case for considering a closure and that more weight should be placed on empirical data than on model projections. Council staff added that dense recruitment patches have also been observed outside the proposed closure boundary, including biomass extending north from Hudson Canyon.

On the potential NYB closure, a PDT member said they were not ready to make a recommendation but were glad the area could be examined further in SAMS. They described it as important to the fishery and encouraged the Committee to consider a two-year planning horizon given declining yields and distinct spatial patterns of recruitment.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** shared a report from a vessel that landed a 32-count sample from the NYB. He noted that some vessels are catching about 2,000 pounds per day but are picking out a substantial number of small scallops.

NGOM Sub-TALs

Council staff revisited the discussion on subdividing the NGOM into two management units, Stellwagen Bank and NGOM Other, and reviewed the two boundary options under consideration. Option 1 would use the boundaries of the Framework 32 Stellwagen Area with a 1nm buffer. Option 2 would establish a straight east–west boundary at 41° 35' N, which would be simpler to monitor and more enforceable.

A PDT member noted they had proposed a new management box encompassing a larger portion of the Area of Interest (AOI) to avoid re-estimating biomass. They asked whether to retain the FW 32 box with a buffer or create a slightly larger area that covers most of Stellwagen Bank's AOI. Council staff responded that a larger management area would be preferable, explaining that smaller closures are harder to enforce once the set-aside limit is reached. The PDT agreed to bring both options forward to the AP and Committee but favored evaluating the larger box first. For this model, it was also recommended to include a transit exemption once the limit is reached. Council staff agreed, noting that an exemption would help vessels from Provincetown and other ports return safely after closure. The PDT discussed the concept of a transit corridor west of Option 1, which received general support.

Council staff then asked whether the southern boundary east of the NGOM closure should be extended under Option 2. A PDT member raised concerns about timing, noting that the NGOM fishery is scheduled

to open April 1 without partitioning and asked how the fishery would operate if implementation were delayed. Council staff acknowledged the added complexity and a PDT member cited GARFO feedback suggesting that Framework 40 could include language specifying that, in the event of a delay, separate allocations would not take effect and the fishery would operate as a single area until implementation.

Several PDT members supported splitting NGOM into sub-areas to identify where fishing pressure is likely to occur and to create new opportunities in less-fished areas. Others expressed concern about limited PDT participation under current conditions and recommended triaging which measures can realistically be completed before final action.

Discussion then turned to area-specific observations. One PDT member stated that, based on dredge size-frequency data, Platts Bank likely corresponds to the 80 mm size mode. On Jeffreys Ledge, they observed lower apparent catchability, while Platts Bank showed a bimodal distribution including older scallops estimated at roughly eight years old.

Split Day-at-sea allocations and DAS Carryover

The PDT discussed potential regional splits of Limited Access DAS between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic and how carry-over provisions could function under that structure. A PDT member supported exploring a DAS split and said that reducing carry-over may be beneficial. Because dividing carry-over by region would be complex, they suggested setting a maximum number of carry-over days and apportioning them in the same ratio as the DAS split. Flexibility should remain in that ratio to maintain viable trip limits. Council staff agreed and asked the PDT what minimum DAS levels in each region would ensure a viable trip.

The PDT member raised concerns about using F_{MSY} as the basis for setting DAS and noted that long-standing carry-over provisions allowing up to half of a vessel's allocation to roll over could have negative consequences. There was support for proportional allocation but some felt it may be time to begin scaling carry-over back. Council staff agreed, recommending a stepwise reduction over several years. If a DAS split moves forward, carry-over should be divided in the same proportion as the regional allocation for that year or aligned with the following year's split when used.

A PDT member reiterated that the purpose of the split is to control fishing mortality on Georges Bank. They warned that adding complex carry-over rules could blur how much effort is actually applied to that region and recommended exploring alternative F rates for the Mid-Atlantic. They also outlined another possible scenario: prohibiting the activation of carryover days in the same fishing year. Under that approach, carryover days would not be lost but could only be used in subsequent years, preventing an immediate increase in effort.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** commented that a range of 8–10 DAS would be viable and asked for clarification on how this would be calculated. Council staff explained that the Committee tasked the PDT with exploring this and that DAS would not be based directly on the regional ABC value. Instead, an overall F rate could be identified for the fishery, with exploitable biomass then divided east and west of the management line. Mr. Minkiewicz noted that while 10 carry-over days is significant, many vessels currently hold that number. He stressed that vessels should not

lose days if they have complied with regulations and that a fixed, predictable carry-over limit would help operators plan ahead. Council staff agreed, observing that DAS allocations have been reduced in recent years and that some vessels may struggle to fish their full 20 DAS within one season. Mr. Minkiewicz replied that vessels save days for many operational reasons, and no single rationale applies to all.

Scallop RSA

Council staff initiated a discussion on the 2026 Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) program, noting that the publication of the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) remains uncertain. Staff added that the issue remains under review at NOAA HQ and the Department of Commerce as part of the federal grants process, and no reason for the delay has been provided. The Council will need to decide whether to reduce the RSA set-aside for 2026 and how to treat any pounds exceeding those required for existing multi-year awards.

A PDT member asked whether the 1.27 million pounds currently cited for RSA includes pounds from the NGOM RSA. Council staff confirmed that it does. The PDT member then clarified that while some of the 2026 pounds are already allocated, most of the NGOM pounds remain unallocated for multi-year awards. They asked if, in the event there is no 2026 competition, any of those unallocated pounds could be added to existing projects and whether doing so would be beneficial. Council staff said that regulations allow excess RSA pounds to be reallocated to existing projects to expand their scope or otherwise make them available for research.

A PDT member asked whether survey work would proceed in 2026 and 2027 if the NOFO remains on hold. Council staff confirmed that all surveys except Maine DMR's are funded through 2027, ensuring continuity in data collection. When asked whether existing survey awards could be modified without holding an entirely new RSA competition, staff replied that the GARFO could potentially expand the scope of current awards if necessary.

There was a question on whether reallocation would apply only to projects with 2026–2027 components and whether any extension clause exists. Council staff said that only multi-year awards running through 2026 may qualify and that the status of the Maine DMR survey is uncertain.

2024 Year-end Report

Council staff presented the 2024 Year-End Report, detailing catch accounting for the year. As the government shutdown prevented NOAA analysts from attending, the PDT discussed the report in abbreviated form, focusing on confirming estimation methods for State Waters catch.

Council staff explained that federal landings data are nearly finalized, and the remaining task is to estimate State Waters removals to complete total catch accounting. PDT members agreed to continue using the established method of subtracting verified federal landings from total dealer data and using state permit information to apportion the remaining catch among individual states.

It was observed that effort in Maine and Massachusetts has remained consistent, with little change in overall magnitude compared to prior years. Staff confirmed that the final report will incorporate all available data through the end of the fishing year to ensure the most accurate total before specification development.

No changes were proposed to the calculation approach or reporting structure, and the PDT agreed that the existing methodology remains appropriate for tracking State Waters catch in the absence of further NOAA input.

Table 1- Scallop FY2024 Year-end Summary re-attributed using scallop permit category

Row	Allocations	Allocated Landings (lbs)	Actual Landings (lbs)	Difference (lbs; Allocated minus Landings)	% caught	Notes
1	Overfishing Limit (OFL)	73,647,644	20,839,582	52,808,062	28.3%	Row 2+Row 3 + state waters landings
2	Northern Gulf of Maine TAC	420,598	411,258	9,340	97.8%	Northern Gulf of Maine declared trips
3	Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), ACL	47,392,786	19,739,467	27,653,319	41.7%	Row 4+5+6+7
4	Incidental Target Total Allowable Catch (TAC)	50,706	4,345	46,361	8.6%	LAGC Category C permit landings
5	Research Set-Aside (RSA) TAC	1,275,000	1,301,331	-26,331	102.1%	Landings on trips with RSA VMS declaration
6	Observer Set-Aside (OSA) TAC	473,944	467,392	6,552	98.6%	Table 2 total
7	Scallop Fishery ACL	45,172,731	17,966,399	27,206,332	39.8%	Rows 8+9+10+11
8	Limited Access sub-ACL (94.5% of ACL)	42,688,120	16,884,224	25,803,896	39.6%	LA total - OSA for LA
9	LAGC IFQ sub-ACL/ACT (5% of ACL)	2,257,534	1,024,776	1,232,758	45.4%	Allocation + carryover - landings
9a	Carryover Total for LAGC IFQ Fleet (FY 2018 to FY 2019)	109,600	NA	NA	NA%	Sum of all IFQ Only vessels' FY carryover lbs
10	Limited Access Vessels with IFQ sub-ACL/ACT (0.5% of ACL)	227,076	57,399	169,677	25.3%	Allocation + carryover - landings
10a	Carryover Total for LAGC IFQ/LA Fleet (IFQ lb only)	8,104	NA	NA	NA%	Sum of all IFQ/LA vessels' FY IFQ carryover lbs
11	Unattributed catch	NA	0	NA	NA%	NA
12	State Waters Landings	865,946	688,857	177,089	79.5%	Table 3 total
13	Limited Access sub-APL	24,186,922	17,306,991	6,879,931	71.6%	Limited Access Annual Projected Landings (APL)
14	IFQ Only APL	1,278,681	1,065,026	213,655	83.3%	Limited Access General Category Annual (IFQ only Projected Landings (APL)
15	Limited Access with IFQ APL	127,868	97,649	30,219	76.4%	Limited Access with IFQ (Combo) Annual Projected Landings (APL)

Table 2 - Observer Set-Aside

SCALLOP MEATS	FLEET
422,767	LA
40,250	IFQ
4,375	COMBO
467,392	TOTAL

Table 3 - State Landings

Row	SCALLOP MEATS	Type
1	34,174	Federal, in state water
2	434,538	State Permit Only
3	88,398	State, no VMS, has active permit
4	129,978	State, no VMS, no active permit
5	1,769	Unknown, has VMS, no active permit

Table 4 - Northern Gulf of Maine

Row	Active Permit	SCALLOP MEATS
1	LGC A	84,918
2	LGC B	326,340
3	Total	411,258

Table 5 - Miscellaneous

Row	Type	Scallop Meats
1	Carryover (LAGC Only)	-109,600
2	Carryover (LAGC COMBO)	-8,104
3	Incidental (LAGC C)	4,345
4	Unattributed	NA



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MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Plan Development Team

Webinar

October 16, 2025

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) met on October 16th, 2025 at 9:30 AM via webinar to: 1) discuss Scallop Committee tasking and issues related to the development of Framework Adjustment 40; 2) discuss the development of the Scallop Strategic Plan; 3) discuss other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; ME DMR: Carl Huntsberger; SMAST: Dr. Adam Delargy; MA DMF: Kelly Whitmore; CFF: Tasha O'Hara

Also present were Scallop Committee members Melanie Griffin (Chair), and John Pappalardo, and Eric Hansen, along with 11 members of the public.

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES

The PDT began with a review of the agenda and updates on current work items. Council staff explained that because of ongoing government shutdown impacts, no new SAMS model runs were available. Staff noted that they would instead continue work on Framework 40 through alternative analyses based on the initial projection of 2026 biomass and exploitable biomass.

Council staff also acknowledged ongoing delays in producing final combined 2025 survey estimates. As a result of the delay, initial projections have been postponed and instead the PDT will focus on addressing known issues with the data and its treatment before generating new model runs.

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRAMEWORK 40

Committee Tasking

Council staff reviewed several approaches for setting catch limits and calculating fishing mortality using available data. They described how these methods would rely on existing biomass estimates and past SAMS results to approximate removals under different F-rate assumptions. They also included how landings per unit effort (LPUE) assumptions would be incorporated into the analysis. Staff explained that as LPUE decreases, vessels require more days-at-sea (DAS) to achieve the same catch, increasing the total bottom area swept. Staff added that this relationship between LPUE and fishing mortality will need further PDT input to determine the most appropriate assumptions going forward.

The PDT then discussed the technical details of calculating harvest from exploitable biomass when SAMS projections are unavailable. One PDT member asked whether the approach explicitly accounts for discards, noting that calculations from NEFSC previously used a value of $0.11 \times F$ to estimate discards. They added that this adjustment could change the total allowable catch by roughly 1,000 pounds, depending on the assumed F rate. Council staff replied that discards were not yet explicitly included in the current formulation. Another PDT member expressed general support for this staff approach and suggested using the derived F rates as a low-end estimate until full SAMS results become available. Council staff agreed, adding that one advantage of the simplified calculation framework is its flexibility, allowing the PDT, Advisory Panel, or Committee to explore different scenarios in real time without requiring static model outputs. The PDT broadly agreed on using a three-year moving estimate for LPUE, citing the rapid changes in the fishery from year to year that would make a five-year estimate non-representative of current fishery conditions. Several PDT members also supported showing the recent LPUE estimates from the SAMS model to help the Advisory Panel and Committee compare current conditions to historical model results. It was agreed that these model-derived values should be provided with clear notation of when equations or assumptions were modified.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund)** agreed with a three-year LPUE average. He also asked about trade-offs associated with potential closures, such as whether closing the New York Bight (NYB) or Area I would effectively result in a 10-DAS reduction for the fleet. Council staff responded that under the “No Action” alternative, both areas would remain open and that additional analyses will evaluate the DAS implications of potential closures once data become available.

Regional DAS Allocations

The PDT revisited the discussion on splitting Limited Access DAS between the Georges Bank and Mid-Atlantic regions. The PDT expressed general support for advancing this work as a 2026 priority, given the current limitations on modeling and staff capacity under the government shutdown.

During the discussion, Council staff shared that one possible way to move this measure forward in the future would be to eliminate or modify the DAS carryover provision. A PDT member asked whether carryover DAS could instead be banked for use in a future season, to which staff replied that this approach would require further input from GARFO to determine feasibility and enforcement implications. Another PDT member expressed support for reducing carryover DAS in general, explaining that this would lower management uncertainty and help stabilize effort levels between fishing years. They reiterated that regional DAS allocations remain an important long-term goal, as splitting DAS between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic could benefit both the resource and the fleet by allowing the Council to more precisely control the fishing mortality rates in each region. They added that spatial LPUE analyses could provide useful context for understanding how fishing patterns may shift even without a defined management boundary, and suggested raising this concept with the Advisory Panel for feedback.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** asked whether, given the uncertainty of implementing new measures by April 1, a regional DAS split could realistically be applied mid-season, especially with the 18 DAS

carry-over currently in place. Council staff agreed this is a valid concern and noted that the same logic applies to the NGOM sub-allocation discussion. They cautioned that it may be difficult to implement these measures after the start of FY 2026.

NGOM Sub-TALs

The PDT revisited the discussion on establishing Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) sub-TALs, including how the Stellwagen Bank and NGOM Other management areas might be implemented if the framework advances on schedule.

One PDT member recommended updating the analysis to use model-estimated growth biomass rather than survey-average exploitable biomass. They also suggested that if the areas open under separate sub-allocations, their openings should be staggered, with the Advisory Panel advising which should open first. They added that, in the event that FW40 is delayed, the sub-allocation option should be removed. Council staff agreed that if a delay occurs, management should proceed without sub-allocations.

Another PDT member supported the idea of a transit corridor but advised that boundaries should not intersect areas known to contain scallops. They noted that one reason for including a corridor is to facilitate vessel access for boats operating from Provincetown, and it will be important to confirm with the Advisory Panel that any proposed transit routes are equitable for all harvesters. Council staff agreed, emphasizing the importance of ensuring equitable access across ports. On the borders of this transit area, a PDT member added that the management boundaries in Options 1 and 2 should remain unchanged, as they were drawn based on survey domains that were subsequently modeled for biomass estimation.

There was some general concern that the Framework 40 final rule would be in place by April 1, with some members concerned about introducing new, complex measures given the ongoing workload.

RSA Compensation 2026

Council staff opened the discussion by asking the PDT to consider whether there would be any benefit to reducing the 2026 RSA set-aside and how the Council should treat unused RSA pounds this year, given continued uncertainty surrounding the publication of the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

One PDT member said that if the Council chooses to reduce the set-aside, it should not be cut down to only the level currently needed to fund existing awards. They recommended leaving some additional allocation available for potential project expansion if the NOFO moves forward. They asked whether there is a clear timeline in the event that the NOFO were released as late as January that would still allow the RSA process to proceed. Council staff replied that a timeline likely exists, but the safest course would be to leave the set-aside unchanged, as any unused pounds could potentially be banked or reallocated later if necessary.

Another PDT member raised concerns about the realities of compensation fishing, explaining that with fewer high-density areas available, especially if rotational areas remain closed, most compensation trips would take place on open bottom where catch rates are lower than in recent years. They noted that this raises broader questions about how well the RSA program performs under current conditions and how the Council should evaluate its structure if catch efficiency continues to decline. Council staff asked whether there were any specific data sources that could be used to examine these trends. The PDT member suggested considering market price trends and trip duration, noting that while high prices could offset

some challenges, reduced catch rates mean longer trips and greater uncertainty. They advised caution about spending time on major RSA adjustments given the current complexity and uncertain program performance

The PDT broadly agreed that if the 2026 NOFO does not proceed, a modest reduction in the RSA set-aside would be reasonable, but they also supported retaining some additional pounds beyond the base level to preserve flexibility for ongoing projects.

Public Comment:

- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** asked whether the Council had considered allowing default specifications to take effect on April 1, providing vessels with 18 DAS initially, and then updating allocations once SAMS analyses resume and the new specifications are ready. Council staff acknowledged this as a possible approach but noted that the preferred goal remains to keep the Framework 40 schedule on track for December final action, rather than relying on default measures.

AGENDA ITEM #3: SCALLOP STRATEGIC PLAN

Council staff reviewed the nine objectives from the Scallop Strategic Plan Roadmap and asked the PDT to provide input on potential evaluation criteria for each objective.

Objective 1 - One PDT member suggested that evaluation criteria should account for the full duration of implementation, including both Council and NMFS review time. They noted that the timing of final implementation is not entirely within the Council's control and that performance metrics should reflect this.

Objective 2 - A PDT member recommended developing new forecasting models for scallops, such as GeoSAMS or other real-time projection tools, to improve responsiveness during specification development and reduce the number of alternatives considered. Other PDT members agreed that the language should remain broad to allow flexibility in projection method development. Another PDT member supported this idea but emphasized the importance of maintaining full documentation of all calculation methods, including comparing projected versus realized fishing mortality and accounting for differences in meat yield, quality, and reproductive potential among SAMS areas. It was also added that while incorporating confidence intervals could improve the presentation of uncertainty, overly wide intervals may provide little useful information. Council staff suggested that the plan could instead focus on evaluating the precision and uncertainty range of biomass projections rather than relying solely on point estimates.

Objective 3 - One PDT member said that advancing spatial management approaches in the NGOM aligns well with this objective and suggested examining area-specific growth rates to improve model accuracy. Council staff proposed this could include progress toward developing Gulf of Maine-specific model parameters. Another PDT member recommended tracking the spatial footprint of the fishery over time to assess how effectively rotational and open-bottom areas disperse fishing effort compared to previous years.

Objective 4 - A PDT member suggested using observer data to verify whether discard patterns of poor-quality meats align with fleet reports. They asked whether higher discard rates occur in legacy closed

areas and whether nematode or grey meat prevalence varies spatially. Another PDT member proposed analyzing market grades and size structures to evaluate the performance of rotational fishing areas, including comparisons between long-standing areas (e.g., NLS-N, Area II) and newer ones like NYB. They added that trip length could also be evaluated to see if longer trips correlate with selectivity or differences in catch composition.

Objective 6 - A PDT member highlighted that recent IFQ program reviews have shown differences in profitability across fleet segments, with LAGC IFQ, Limited Access, and NGOM vessels each operating under distinct financial structures. Another PDT member noted that despite declining landings, the scallop fishery maintains a high profit margin relative to other fisheries. Discussion also touched on net revenue per vessel, with the PDT noting that NGOM owner-operators differ significantly from Limited Access participants fishing in the NGOM. One PDT member suggested exploring crew-share data, but staff clarified that existing analyses already account for producer surplus and crew compensation.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** encouraged the PDT to consider the potential effects of permit stacking when evaluating economic performance. Council staff replied that while permit stacking is not itself a measure of viability, it may indirectly affect fleet behavior and could be noted qualitatively.

Objective 7 - One PDT member proposed tracking how many RSA projects receive funding beyond survey work to assess program diversity. Another suggested reviewing historical funding data to measure the proportion of RSA funding directed to surveys over time. Additional recommendations included tracking the number and diversity of proposals submitted annually to evaluate industry participation and program reach.

Objective 8 - A PDT member recommended distinguishing between different types of enhancement activities to better track progress. Another asked about the industry's movement toward enhancement and the status of the enhancement workshop report. Council staff confirmed that a VIMS enhancement workshop report was released in February and that discussion of industry-led projects has been limited since. When asked how success would be measured, staff clarified that this objective focuses on building infrastructure and capacity for future enhancement work rather than achieving immediate outcomes.

Objective 9 - A PDT member observed that the scallop fishery already has a high volume of topic-specific meetings, making consistent participation challenging for industry representatives. They suggested tracking participation trends across recurring meetings and monitoring changes in Advisory Panel applications as a proxy for engagement.

Public Comment:

- **Mary Beth Tooley (O'Hara Corporation)** noted an increase in MREP (Marine Resource Education Program) participation among scallop industry members, contrasting with prior years when there were no applicants from the scallop fishery.

With no other business the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:30AM



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MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Advisory Panel

Hybrid; New Bedford, MA

October 21, 2025

The Scallop Advisory Panel (AP) met in New Bedford, MA and via webinar on October 21, 2025 at 9:00AM to discuss: 1) Framework 40 and the range of potential access area and DAS allocations for the 2026 and 2027 fishing years, ABC/ACLs, total allowable landings for the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) management area, targets for General Category incidental catch, General Category access area trips, and set-asides for the observer and research programs for fishing year 2026 and default specifications for fishing year 2027; 2) Receive an update on ongoing 2025 scallop work priorities; 3) discuss other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: James Gutowski (Chair), Cassie Larsen (Vice-Chair), Michael Marchetti, Thomas Coley, Derek Eilertsen, Jay Elsner, Paul Vafides, Ed Mullis, Charles Quinn, Chris Merl, Brent Fulcher, Brady Lybarger, Wes Brighton, Ben Martens, Kirby Aarsheim; Council Staff: Connor Buckley, Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; Scallop Committee: Melanie Griffin (Chair), Melissa Smith, Michelle Duval, Ted Platz, Renee Zobel, John Pappalardo.

Approximately 35 members of the public were also in attendance.

KEY OUTCOMES:

The Scallop AP developed the following recommendations to the Scallop Committee for measures to include in Framework 40:

- On full time LA areas and trip limits, the AP passed two motions. In Motion 1 on access areas, the AP recommended allocating a 9,000lb access area trip to Area I. In Motion 2 on access areas, the AP recommended allocating a 6,000lb access area trip to Area I and a 6,000lb trip to Elephant Trunk.
- On full time LA Days at Sea (DAS) the AP passed four motions. The AP passed two motions that toggled Elephant Trunk as a closure and would develop options for 32, 34, 36, and 38 DAS. The AP also passed a motion with a closure of Elephant Trunk with 28 and 30 DAS. A motion for 34 DAS was passed as a stand-alone motion. They also passed one motion recommending alternatives that would revert Area I to open bottom in FY 2026
- On 2027 default measures, the AP recommended no default access area trips. The AP also recommended that the available DAS carryover should remain at 10 DAS.

- On target F rate to set a Total Allowable Landing (TAL) for the NGOM for FY 2026 and FY 2027 (default), the AP recommended developing an option for fishing all open areas of the NGOM at $F=0.25$. They also recommended a default set-aside of 50% of the FY 2026 set-aside.
- On scallop RSA compensation fishing, the AP recommended that RSA compensation fishing be limited to areas available to the Limited Access DAS specified in FW40.

For 2026 work priorities, the AP developed the following recommendations to the Scallop Committee

- The AP passed one motion recommending that the Committee begin to 1) develop a mechanism to allow permit stacking for the Limited Access fleet and 2) use the 71°W boundary as a dividing line for separate regional allocations of LA DAS.
- The AP passed one motion recommending the development of methods for controlling predation, which could include additional scallop enhancement strategies, such as seeding or transplanting.
- The AP passed one motion recommending the development of a Northern Edge rotational area (Closed Area II HAPC).

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES:

Council staff opened the meeting with brief updates on the status of the scallop resource and recent Council and SSC actions. Staff reviewed results from the 2025 scallop resource surveys, noting a continued decline in biomass across the Mid-Atlantic, Georges Bank, and the Gulf of Maine. They also summarized the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) review of the 2026 Overfishing Limit (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) recommendations. The SSC agreed that the PDT's proposed modifications were reasonable and supported Option 1 for the OFL/ABC control rule. However, the SSC emphasized the need for additional statistical justification and documentation of the underlying parameter choices and model assumptions in future PDT analyses.

Staff further noted that while biomass levels are the lowest observed in the fishery's time series, the PDT and SSC did not consider the current OFL or ABC recommendations to be constraining on overall fishery operations. Updated reference points from the 2025 Research Track Assessment (RTA) were also briefly reviewed, along with the overall outlook for the scallop resource entering the next management cycle.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRAMEWORK 40

Council staff noted that the ongoing federal government shutdown presents an additional challenge to addressing the Committee's tasking for Framework 40. Because additional SAMS model runs would not be possible without NEFSC staff, these are unlikely to be completed before final action. The most recent analyses and available information will therefore be used to maintain progress and keep the action on schedule. Staff emphasized that delays beyond December could push final action to January 2026, which would risk late implementation and negatively affect Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) management via implementation of the default TAL.

To support decision-making in the absence of additional SAMS runs, staff presented an alternative analytical method for the AP's consideration. This approach uses available exploitable biomass projections and an assumption of landings per unit effort (LPUE) and fishing mortality to estimate

removals under a range of scenarios. Staff noted that if the federal government reopens before the November meetings, SAMS model outputs could potentially be provided.

Staff summarized the range of Committee tasking analyzed by the PDT and any recommendations that were made at the October 16th meeting. The PDT did not recommend closures of the Northern Flank (NF) or Southern Flank (SF). The PDT did not make a recommendation regarding the NYB Closure, citing trade-offs between protecting recruitment there and maintaining open-bottom opportunities.

On the issue of the proposal for splitting days-at-sea (DAS) allocations between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, the PDT recommended deferring both the regional DAS allocation and DAS carryover modifications to be considered as 2026 work priorities. Staff then shared that the PDT recommended using a three-year moving average for LPUE, noting that this approach captures short-term variability more accurately than a five-year average. Staff added that 2027 biomass projections were not yet available, limiting their ability to evaluate long-term implications.

Staff also reviewed other elements of Framework 40, including default specifications for 2027, part-time limited access (PT-LA) allocations, LAGC IFQ access area trips, NGOM sub-TALs and TAL, and RSA compensation fishing. The PDT recommended not establishing separate NGOM sub-TALs within this framework and instead considering that as a 2026 work priority. The PDT also did not recommend reducing the RSA set-aside, noting uncertainty in the federal grant cycle and outstanding multi-year awards. Staff noted uncertainty in the federal grant cycle and existing multi-year awards, and the PDT did not recommend changing the RSA set-aside in FW40.

Discussion:

The AP discussed timing concerns and potential effects of the government shutdown on FW40 implementation. When asked about deadlines, Council staff replied that while no formal deadline exists, meeting the April 1 implementation date will be difficult even without shutdown delays, as several steps depend on federal review timelines outside Council control. They reiterated that minimizing the likelihood of the NGOM opening on April 1 under the default TAL remains a top priority.

The AP recommended developing a range of specification alternatives for further analysis under Framework 40. Regarding the Elephant Trunk (ET), one AP member asked whether it was toggled open and closed in the model runs. Staff confirmed that closure of ET was not included in Committee motions.

The AP generally expressed support for applying a three-year realized open-area LPUE average. Some raised questions about the reference points used to calculate the OFL and ABC. Staff explained that the 2025 Research Track Assessment (RTA) updated these values, and the new reference points can only be changed through a future stock assessment. The AP also discussed the relatively low F-rates (0.23–0.25) proposed for 2026. Staff clarified that these are appropriate given the continued decline in biomass on Georges Bank and reflect more conservative harvest levels.

It was asked whether a three-year average of realized open-area LPUE had been used previously. Staff responded that it is new and was introduced to address unforeseen circumstances created by the shutdown and missing SAMS projections. Additional questions addressed LPUE coverage, with staff noting that the underlying data represent April through September, during which approximately 69 % of total DAS had been utilized.

During the same discussion, the AP focused further on DAS carryover within the regional DAS framework. Staff reiterated that while DAS carryover provides vessel flexibility, it also adds management uncertainty when forecasting annual open-area landings. The AP agreed that the issue warrants future evaluation, possibly through a phased reduction approach. One AP member commented that this complication was the main roadblock to dividing the fishery east–west. There was also a suggestion to explore high-density pre-recruit areas northwest of the NYB closure as potential conservation zones in exchange for higher F-rates elsewhere. It was argued that protecting these juvenile concentrations could benefit the fishery in 2027–2028.

When discussing potential management of NGOM sub-areas under Framework 40, an AP member asked why one NGOM area was left open while another remained closed. They were informed that federal staff had previously stated that the two NGOM sub-areas could not be open simultaneously under current operational constraints, though staggered openings might be possible once government operations resume.

An AP member asked whether the 25,000-lb RSA deduction shown in the NGOM flowchart was per area or total. Staff clarified that it represents a single total deduction across NGOM and could be revisited through Council action if desired. Staff added that this conservative approach was used given uncertainty in upcoming RSA competitions and ongoing multi-year awards. Another AP member observed that realized fishing mortality on Stellwagen had been higher than the NGOM management target (0.15–0.25).

Several AP members expressed differing views about further subdividing NGOM. One AP member stated that creating additional sub-areas would be inequitable to Limited Access vessels and reiterated that NGOM should remain open to LA access. Others supported opening NGOM areas concurrently to reduce crowding and distribute effort more evenly in high-density fishing zones.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz (Fisheries Survival Fund)** asked how much catch is removed for management and scientific uncertainty. Staff explained that the management/scientific uncertainty adjustments are applied in determining the ACT and do not change the DAS projections. Mr. Smolowitz emphasized that uncertainty is a major concern and suggested eliminating DAS carryover in 2026, dividing the open area to reduce uncertainty, and evaluating LPUE by fleet-efficiency quintiles. He also warned against heavy fishing in dense aggregations, citing past discard mortality in NLS-West.
- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** asked whether the Science Center must approve the PDT's analytical approach. Staff said the math was verified and the Science Center lacks veto authority. Dr. Quinn also questioned low biomass estimates for the HAPC and Northern Edge, which staff attributed to the dredge survey's exclusion of smaller pre-recruits.
- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund)** noted that the 0.25 F-rate for the Mid-Atlantic equates to roughly 26 DAS, which is among the lowest in the time series apart from Framework 30. He then clarified that management and scientific uncertainty affect the annual catch target rather than DAS projections, meaning that removing DAS carryover would not alter the DAS calculations.
- **Walter White (Scalloper, New Bedford)** asked about biomass thresholds for area closures. Staff explained that closures are based on pre-recruit density within rotational access areas, not

poundage, and noted that ET is a traditional closure while NYB is new. Mr. White expressed support for keeping ET closed to promote growth.

- **Paul Weckesser (Scallop, New Bedford)** asked how changes in the fishing mortality rate used affects the 800,000 lb NGOM TAL threshold above which would allow limited LA fishing. Staff responded that the F rate in NGOM is capped between 0.15 and 0.25, and that the realized catch threshold would vary accordingly.

Fishery Specifications for FY 2026 and FY 2027 (Default)

1. MOTION: FULCHER/MULLIS

Recommend that the Committee tasks the PDT to develop alternatives in FW40 that would:

- Allocate access area trips to the FT LA component in the following manner:

Access Areas & Trips	FT LA possession limit	FT LA AA allocation	PT LA AA possession limit	PT LA AA allocation	LAGC IFQ Access Area trips
1 trip – Area 1 (Sliver, A1)	9,000 lb	9,000 lb	3,600 lb	3,600 lb	100% of trip allocation in Area I
All areas would close to LAGC fishing once the LAGC IFQ trips have been taken. Maintain the 2025 Area I boundaries of the transit corridor Area II closed, Nantucket Lightship North and South closed, Elephant Trunk closed					

Rationale: The industry’s experience fishing in Area I in FY 2025 suggests that there is still sufficient exploitable biomass in the area to support access area in FY 2026. An access area trip in Area I would allow for greater opportunities for the LAGC IFQ component.

Discussion: AP members discussed whether Area I should reopen as an access area with a single 9,000-lb trip limit or remain open bottom. Several AP members expressed concern that designating Area I as an access area could drive high F-rates and reduce LPUE if catches were weaker than expected. Others preferred open bottom management, arguing that DAS naturally self-regulate and prevent overfishing. Some AP members cautioned that if the biomass did not materialize, the fleet would still try to meet their quota, negatively impacting the resource. Others countered that maintaining access through a single controlled trip would provide flexibility and short-term economic opportunity. When asked about the delayed opening provision for Area 1 that was implemented during Framework 39, staff confirmed that the delayed opening of May 15 stays in effect unless otherwise modified.

The AP then had a robust discussion on whether Elephant Trunk (ET) should remain closed or reopen as an access area. Some questioned the PDT’s rationale for continuing the ET closure,

asking whether allowing limited removals could offset effort from Area I. There was a suggestion that, in theory, a small 9,000-lb trip to either ET or AI could distribute pressure if one area underperformed. However, it was acknowledged that elevated natural mortality (M) in ET likely made that approach impractical. Other AP members agreed that reopening ET was too risky given recent mortality and uncertain recruitment. Staff confirmed that mortality levels remain high in both ET and HCS and that keeping ET closed is consistent with PDT advice.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** remarked that predation could significantly alter available biomass by April. He recommended allowing vessels to opt out of the Area I access area trip in exchange for two open-area DAS so captains could decide based on real-time conditions. Staff replied that this would require coordination with GARFO and may not be feasible under current shutdown constraints.

MOTION #1 CARRIED 12-2-0

2. MOTION: LARSEN/VAFIDES

Recommend that the Committee tasks the PDT to develop alternatives in FW40 that would:

- Allocate access area trips to the FT LA component in the following manner:

Access Areas & Trips	FT LA allocation	FT LA AA possession limit	PT LA AA allocation	PT LA AA possession limit	LAGC IFQ Access Area trips
1 trip – Area 1 (Sliver, A1)	6,000 lb	12,000 lb	2,400	4,800 lb	100% of trip allocation in Area I or Elephant Trunk
1 trip – Elephant Trunk	6,000 lb		2,400		
All areas would close to LAGC fishing once the LAGC IFQ trips have been taken. Maintain the 2025 Area I boundaries of the transit corridor Trip trading at 6,000 lb increments Area II closed, Nantucket Lightship North and South closed					

Rationale: The industry’s experience fishing in Area I in FY 2025 suggests that there is still sufficient exploitable biomass in the area to support a 6,000 lb access area trip in FY 2026. There is also sufficient biomass in the Elephant Trunk to support a 6,000 lb trip. An access area trip in Area I would allow for greater opportunities for the LAGC IFQ component.

Discussion: Several AP members raised concerns about high M in ET. One AP member warned that opening the area could lead to near-complete mortality and leave nothing available for 2027. Others supported the motion, arguing that keeping ET off the table entirely was unnecessary and that a small-trip option would maintain limited access without overly depleting biomass. Staff estimated that a 6,000-lb trip would remove roughly 2 million lb (25%) and correspond to an F-rate of 0.29. Some AP members agreed that this was reasonable.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** remarked that trip limits must remain economically viable. He asked at what point trip sizes become too small to justify travel and fuel expenses

MOTION #2 CARRIED 14-0-0

3. MOTION: AARSHEIM/QUINN

Recommend that the Committee task the PDT to develop specification alternatives in FW40 that set FT LA DAS at:

- 32, 34, 36, 38 DAS
- The following areas would be closed to open bottom fishing:
 - ⊖ Area II
 - Nantucket Lightship Region: South, North
- The following areas would be open bottom:
 - Area I, NYB, ET, HCS

Rationale: An increase in the number of DAS would allow for greater flexibility and allow for LA vessels to spread out their effort across the resource.

Discussion: Several AP members supported evaluating broader options to reflect the current condition of the fishery. One AP member stated that allowing vessels to spread out and fish where they choose would provide operational flexibility and reduce localized pressure.

Some AP members voiced concerns over the upper limit of analysis being 38 DAS. They argued that the proposed 38-day option may not be biologically or operationally feasible. Council staff advised that allocating 38 DAS without the implementation of the proposed split between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic could exceed the F_{ABC} for Georges Bank.

Supporters of the high DAS option discussed the relationship between low LPUE and economic performance. They noted that when catch rates are low and scallops are more dispersed, higher DAS levels are needed to maintain profitability. One AP member added that larger ring sizes allow smaller scallops to pass through dredges, reducing potential impacts on recruitment.

Public Comment:

- A member of the public remarked that 32 DAS does not represent 32 days of actual fishing because travel and searching time reduce fishing hours and asked whether this was reflected in the analysis. Staff confirmed that these are incorporated into DAS estimates.
- **Ron Smolowitz** asked for the rationale behind the inclusion of NLS-N in the closures. He was informed that there is some biomass in that area. **Mr. Smolowitz** added that an increase in swept area is not necessarily an issue. Dredging sand and gravel in some areas can have positive habitat effects.
- **John Quinn** supported the motion, observing that the proposed DAS levels are moderate relative to historical benchmarks.
- **Walter White** favored a more conservative approach, noting that the AP's role is to ensure sustainability rather than short-term economic outcomes.
- **Peter Hughes (Atlantic Cape Fisheries)** supported higher DAS levels, explaining that fishing behavior differs between access-area and DAS trips; in open areas, vessels are less likely to high-grade, leading to more efficient harvests.
- **Drew Minkiewicz** noted that when compared to historical open-bottom fishing, the proposed F-rate falls near the middle of the time series. Staff confirmed this, clarifying that the resulting overall F would remain below 0.36 and therefore would not constitute overfishing.

MOTION #3 CARRIED 11-2-0

4. MOTION: ELSNER/MERL

Recommend that the Committee task the PDT to develop specification alternatives in FW40 that set FT LA DAS at:

- 32, 34, 36, 38 DAS
- The following areas would be closed to open bottom fishing:
 - ⊖ Area II
 - Nantucket Lightship Region: South, North
 - Elephant Trunk
- The following areas would be open bottom:
 - Area I, NYB, HCS

Rationale: This would add an alternative that would keep the Elephant Trunk closed for an additional year.

Discussion: One AP member supported the analysis but cautioned that it may not be feasible if the F-rate yields only about 30 DAS with ET closed. Another AP member noted that the model shows ET biomass peaking around 17–20 thousand metric tons this year, increasing slightly next year before declining sharply by 2027 if the area remains closed. Staff explained that the model

includes a relatively high M for ET, reflecting recent survey information on environmental stress. This elevated M was incorporated based on observations of warmer bottom-water temperatures approaching the thermal threshold for scallops. They added that the 2025 Research Track Assessment also considered multiple environmental factors affecting scallop survival in ET.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #4 CARRIED 11-2-0

5. MOTION: COLEY/QUINN

Recommend that the Committee task the PDT to develop specification alternatives in FW40 that set FT LA DAS associated with AP Motion #2

- 28, 30 DAS
- The following areas would be closed to open bottom fishing:
 - ⊖ Area II
 - Nantucket Lightship Region: South, North
- The following areas would be open bottom:
 - NYB, HCS

Rationale: This would add an alternative that would keep the Elephant Trunk closed for an additional year.

Discussion: One AP member opposed the motion, noting that 28 days would not reach F_{MSY} and therefore would be too restrictive. They stated that the lowest DAS level they could support would be 32.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #5 CARRIED 11-2-0

6. MOTION: FULCHER/QUINN

Recommend that the Committee task the PDT to develop specification alternatives in FW40 that set FT LA DAS associated with AP Motion #1

- 34 DAS
- The following areas would be closed to open bottom fishing:
 - Area II
 - Nantucket Lightship Region: South, North
 - Elephant Trunk

- The following areas would be open bottom:
 - NYB, HCS

Rationale: 34 DAS represents a minimum viable number of DAS for the industry in FY2026

Discussion: One AP member asked if the closure would effectively remove six DAS from the overall allocation, resulting in approximately 34 DAS remaining. Staff explained that, compared to the earlier analysis, closing ET would increase the open-bottom F-rate for the rest of the resource at that same DAS level.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #6 CARRIED 9-4 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS

7. MOTION: LYBARGER/QUINN

The AP recommends for alternatives that would revert Area I to open bottom in FY 2026, that FY 2025 carryover trips to Area I would be available to be fished beginning on April 1, 2026, with the 60-day carryover period beginning on April 1.

Rationale: This would allow vessels to continue finishing any remaining FY 2025 access area trips to Area I without needing to pause fishing until May 15th, and allow open bottom fishing in Area I earlier in the year following the 60-day carryover period.

Discussion: One AP member asked whether vessels would have only until July 15 to complete trips carried over from the previous year. Staff confirmed that this would be the case if a delayed opening remained in place. Another AP member sought clarification on whether carryover trips could begin April 1. Staff explained that if access-area fishing occurs in Area I, both carryover and new fishing-year trips could take place once the area opens. Under the delayed-opening scenario, FY2026 trips would begin May 15, with the 60-day carryover period starting April 1 and running concurrently.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #7 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

8. MOTION: FULCHER/AARSHEIM

The AP recommends that Limited Access carryover DAS should remain at 10 DAS (Status Quo) available to carry over to subsequent fishing season.

Rationale: The 10 DAS carryover provision was set when the total number of DAS were much higher. The DAS carryover provision does not represent an immediate concern for the scallop fishery.

Discussion: The AP discussed maintaining the current carryover provision of up to 10 unused DAS into the subsequent fishing year. Some AP members expressed concern that continuing this practice could eventually risk exceeding overall fishing mortality limits as has happened in other fisheries like groundfish. Other AP members questioned why the carryover system is based on a fixed number of days rather than a percentage, as is done for the General Category fleet, and suggested revisiting this structure in the future once regular analyses resume.

Supporters of the motion emphasized that most vessels carry over only a portion of the 10 days and that the flexibility helps account for weather, maintenance, and operational constraints. They argued that maintaining the current system is the simplest and most practical approach under present circumstances.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #8 CARRIED 9-4 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS

9. MOTION: ELSNER/FULCHER

Recommend that the Committee task the PDT to move include FY 2027 default allocations of 75% of FY 2026 DAS with no default access area trips.

Discussion: One AP member opined that defaults should remain aligned across Limited Access and LAGC unless there's strong justification to diverge.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #9 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

NGOM Total Allowable Landings for FY 2026 and default measures for FY 2027

10. MOTION: MARTENS/MARCHETTI

The AP recommends that the Committee include a default FY2027 NGOM set-aside of 50% of the FY2026 NGOM set-aside with no FY2027 NGOM TAL.

Rationale: Given consistent delays in implementation of the annual framework, this would prevent an instance where the default allocation is greater than what would be specified in FW40.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION #10 CARRIED 12-0 WITH ONE ABSTENTION

11. MOTION: MARTENS/MARCHETTI

Move to recommend to the committee to continue to do analyses to create two separate management areas for the Northern Gulf of Maine, with option 2 "Southern NGOM up to 42°35'N" with an $F=0.25$ and "NGOM Other" with a $F=0.18$. The areas would be staggered in their openings, with the "Southern NGOM" opening on April 1, with the "NGOM Other" opening after the projected closure of the "Southern NGOM."

If it is determined that we cannot implement two areas within the current timeline, we would use a single area NGOM $F=0.18$

Rationale: Separate subunits within the NGOM would be beneficial for spreading out effort across the management unit, but this motion recognizes that this may not be feasible to implement by April 1.

Discussion: One AP member asked why vessels would not simply fish closer to home rather than travel to other areas. It was explained that fishing in Stellwagen Bank has been strong, drawing significant effort to a small portion of the NGOM and resulting in a high F -rate there. There may be opportunities to explore new fishing grounds elsewhere in the Gulf of Maine, though data for those areas remain limited.

An AP member questioned why the proposed F -rate was 0.18 instead of 0.25. It was clarified that the lower value was used in the previous year and represents a conservative approach. Several AP members opposed dividing NGOM into multiple management areas or applying different F -rates, arguing that the region should function as a single fishery. One AP member said creating separate openings and closures within the same area would add unnecessary complexity without meaningful conservation benefits. Others described the proposal as inequitable to the Limited Access fleet and voiced general opposition to the measure.

Public Comment:

- **Paul Weckesser** stated that dividing NGOM into smaller and smaller areas would hurt smaller operators and concentrate effort.
- **Damian Parkington (LAGC Scallop)** asked how separate NGOM sub-areas would work under current sign-in procedures and encouraged examining new areas of bottom to spread out effort rather than further subdividing existing grounds.

MOTION #11 FAILED 3-9 WITH ONE ABSTENTION

12. MOTION: MARTENS/MARCHETTI

Move to recommend to the committee to continue to do analyses to develop an alternative for a FY2026 NGOM TAL applying an $F=0.18$ to all areas of the NGOM management unit.

Rationale: An F rate of 0.18 would be the same as what was specified in FW39 (FY2025) and would help rebuild the biomass in the NGOM.

Discussion: One AP member asked whether there was concern about the existing scallops growing too old and suggested that slightly higher fishing effort might be warranted to capture these animals before natural mortality increases. Several AP members agreed that an increased F rate would create more opportunity to explore new fishing grounds and expand access. Opponents of the motion emphasized that the realized F-rate already approached levels of concern and that the goal should be to rebuild biomass so that both LAGC and LA vessels can benefit in the future. There was also concern about low F-rates limiting participation and creating inequity for the LA fleet.

Public Comment:

- **Kyle Grant (NGOM fisherman)** supported a higher F-rate, noting that much of the NGOM effort has been concentrated in Stellwagen Bank and that recruitment there has been limited in recent years. He stated that allowing increased removals of mature scallops would help capitalize on existing biomass before it declines due to natural mortality.
- **Paul Weckesser** supported increasing the F-rate, explaining that the fishery is now dominated by very large scallops and that continued underharvesting could lead to mortality losses. He cautioned that if the current population dies off naturally, effort would likely shift elsewhere, creating additional management challenges.

MOTION #12 FAILED 1-13 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS

13. MOTION: LYBARGER/MERL

Move to recommend to the committee to continue to do analyses to develop an alternative for a FY2026 NGOM TAL applying an $F=0.25$ to all areas of the NGOM management unit.

Rationale: Given the age of the dominant exploitable cohort on Stellwagen Bank, an increased fishing mortality rate of $F=0.25$ is warranted. A higher F rate would also allow for more exploration across the NGOM unit.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION #13 CARRIED 13-1 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS

14. MOTION: FULCHER/COLEY

The AP recommends that FY 2026 RSA compensation fishing be limited to areas available to the Limited Access DAS specified in Framework 40.

Rationale: If access area trips are allocated as an alternative in Framework 40, they are unlikely to be able to sustain RSA compensation fishing

Discussion: None

Public Comment:

- **Kyle Grant** asked whether April 1 would serve as the closeout date for RSA compensation fishing associated with 2025 awards. Staff clarified that the 60-day carryover period would remain available for any 2025 RSA compensation fishing within the 50-percent cap and that the carryover window would begin once the area reopens.

MOTION #14 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

AGENDA ITEM #2: 2026 WORK PRIORITIES

Council staff reviewed the current list of 2026 scallop work priorities and invited the Advisory Panel to suggest any additional items for consideration.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

15. MOTION: FULCHER/AARSHEIM

Recommend that the Committee add the following as work priorities in 2026:

1. Begin to develop a mechanism to allow stacking of Limited Access permits
2. Separate, regional allocations of Limited Access Days-at-sea using the 71'W boundary as a dividing line

Rationale: There has been a recent increased interest from the industry for developing opportunities for stacking of Limited Access permits. Limited Access permit stacking would have the benefit of decreasing vessel costs and improving vessel safety. Separate DAS

allocations to the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank was considered for FW40, but recognizing the time and resource constraints due to the government shutdown, this would continue the development of this measure in 2026 for FY2027.

Discussion: One AP member asked for clarification on the purpose of the proposed division. The motion's maker explained that fishing effort in recent years has shifted heavily eastward, resulting in localized depletion on Georges Bank. Establishing a split could help distribute effort more evenly across regions and reduce concentrated pressure. When asked whether the split would be equal, it was noted that the specific division ratio would need to be developed by the PDT.

Another AP member opposed the idea, stating that drawing a dividing line could create operational challenges and force vessels into less productive grounds. They added that the Mid-Atlantic continues to need pressure relief and should not be treated as a single consolidated area.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** expressed concern that the Council's priority-setting process tends to focus on allocation issues rather than increasing overall scallop production. He encouraged future work on management measures to address predation and enhance productivity.
- **Jeff Kaelin (Lund's Fishery)** suggested that the motion could be split into separate components for clarity and voiced full agreement with Mr. Smolowitz's comments.

MOTION #15 CARRIED 6-5 WITH ONE ABSTENTION

16. MOTION: MERL/FULCHER

Recommend that the Committee add the following as work priorities in 2026:

3) Develop methods for controlling scallop predation (e.g. sea stars, crabs, moon snails), which could include additional funding research or allowing for retention of scallop predators (e.g. rock/Jonah crabs). Additionally, this could also encompass additional scallop enhancement strategies, such as seeding or transplanting.

Rationale: Scallop predation has been identified as a substantial source of scallop natural mortality.

Discussion: One AP member expressed support for exploring opportunities to retain and land species such as rock crabs, snails, and other scallop predators, stating that discarding them is inefficient and that markets or research partnerships could be developed to utilize these animals. Another AP member suggested that the Council could also consider compensating participating vessels through a day-rate structure similar to other cooperative programs.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** supported the motion and encouraged the Council to begin formal discussions on predator control strategies. He suggested that scallop vessels could be allowed to retain Jonah crabs or other predators as part of this effort and proposed using existing observer set-aside funds to support starfish removal and other predator-mitigation activities.
- **Ronnie Enoksen (Eastern Fisheries)** also supported the motion, emphasizing that it should include both predator control and enhancement measures such as scallop transplanting and seeding to promote long-term resource sustainability.

MOTION #16 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

17. MOTION: AARSHEIM/FULCHER

Recommend that the Committee add the following as work priorities in 2026:

- 4) Develop a scallop rotational area on the Northern Edge (Closed Area II – North HAPC)

Rationale: Based on the reduced state of the scallop resource on Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, allowing access to the Northern Edge would allow for additional access area fishing opportunities to the scallop fleet. Due to the age of the current exploitable cohort in the Northern Edge, the scallop fleet should have access to these animals before they die of natural mortality.

Discussion: One AP member opposed revisiting the issue, noting that the Council had already addressed it and that no new data were available to justify reopening the discussion. Another AP member supported the motion, stating that the current administration has emphasized enhancing domestic seafood production and that revisiting this measure could contribute to that goal.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** recommended that the Council establish a clear policy prohibiting area closures to commercial fishing unless there is specific scientific evidence demonstrating that fishing activity in that area is causing an adverse impact on protected species.

MOTION #17 CARRIED 11-1 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00PM



New England Fishery Management Council

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Committee

Hybrid; New Bedford, MA

October 22, 2025

The Scallop Committee (Committee) met in New Bedford, MA and via webinar on October 22, 2025 at 9:00AM to discuss: 1) Framework 40 and the range of potential access area and DAS allocations for the 2026 and 2027 fishing years, ABC/ACLs, total allowable landings for the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) management area, targets for General Category incidental catch, General Category IFQ access area trips, and set-asides for the observer and research programs for fishing year 2026 and default specifications for fishing year 2027; 2) Receive an update on ongoing 2025 scallop work priorities; 3) discuss other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Melanie Griffin (Chair) Eric Hansen, Ted Platz, John Pappalardo, Melissa Smith, Renee Zobel, Togue Brawn, Matt Gates, Jake Wiscott, Michelle Duval; Council Staff: Connor Buckley, Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Naresh Pradhan; Scallop Advisory Panel: Tom Coley, Brady Lybarger

Approximately 20 members of the public were also in attendance.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Eric Hansen was voted vice-chair of the Scallop Committee

The Scallop Committee developed the following recommendations for measures to include in Framework 40:

- On full time LA area trips and trip limits, the Committee passed three motions. In Motion 1 on access areas, the Committee recommended allocating a 9,000 lb trip to Area I. In Motion 2 on access areas, the Committee recommended allocating a 6,000 lb trip to Area I and 1 6,000 lb trip to the Elephant Trunk
- On full time LA Days at Sea (DAS) the Committee passed three motions. The Committee passed one motion with the Elephant Trunk open and would develop options for 32, 34, and 36 DAS. The Committee also passed one motion with the Elephant Trunk closed that would develop options for 24 and 34 DAS. One motion passed with the Elephant Trunk as an access area that would develop options for 24 and 30 DAS.
- On target F rate to set a Total Allowable Landing (TAL) for the NGOM for FY 2026 and FY 2027 (default), the Committee recommended developing an option for fishing the Stellwagen area at an $F=0.25$. A second motion recommending the creation of 2 separate sub-management units: "Southern NGOM" NGOM up to 42 35'N" with an $F=0.25$ and "NGOM Other" with a $F=0.18$. hey also recommended a default set-aside of 50% of the FY 2026 set-aside.
- On scallop RSA compensation fishing, the Committee recommended that RSA compensation fishing be limited to areas available to the Limited Access DAS specified in FW40.

For 2026 scallop work priorities, the Committee recommended the following additional priorities:

- Separate, regional allocations of Limited Access Days-at-Sea using the 71°W boundary as a dividing line, and analysis of carryover DAS held by the scallop fleet;
- Modification to the in-shell scallop possession limits in NGOM;
- Work towards creating sub-management units in NGOM (also listed in Scallop Strategic Plan);
- Resume development of a scallop rotational area on the Northern Edge (Closed Area II HAPC)
- The Committee passed one motion recommending that the PDT consider measures that would address fleet and individual vessel efficiency, profitability, and the issue of over capitalization throughout the scallop fleet to include, but not limited to, stacking and leasing.

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES:

Council staff opened the meeting with brief updates on the status of the scallop resource and recent Council and SSC actions. Staff reviewed results from the 2025 scallop resource surveys, noting a continued decline in biomass across the Mid-Atlantic, Georges Bank, and the Gulf of Maine. They also summarized the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC) review of the 2026 Overfishing Limit (OFL) and Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) recommendations.

The Committee next accepted nominations for a Committee Vice-Chair. Nominations were received for Melissa Smith and Eric Hansen. Mr. Hansen was appointed by a 5-4 vote by the Committee.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRAMEWORK 40

Council staff noted that the ongoing federal government shutdown presents an additional challenge to addressing the Committee's tasking for Framework 40. Because additional SAMS model runs would not be possible without NEFSC staff, these are unlikely to be completed before final action. The most recent analyses and available information will therefore be used to maintain progress and keep the action on schedule. Staff emphasized that delays beyond December could push final action to January 2026, which would risk late implementation and negatively affect Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) management via implementation of the default TAL.

To support decision-making in the absence of additional SAMS runs, staff presented an alternative analytical method for the AP's consideration. This approach uses available exploitable biomass projections and an assumption of landings per unit effort (LPUE) and fishing mortality to estimate removals under a range of scenarios. Staff noted that if the federal government reopens before the November meetings, SAMS model outputs could potentially be provided.

Staff summarized the range of Committee tasking analyzed by the PDT and any recommendations that were made at the October 16th meeting. The PDT did not recommend closures of the Northern Flank (NF) or Southern Flank (SF). The PDT did not make a recommendation regarding the NYB Closure, citing trade-offs between protecting recruitment there and maintaining open-bottom opportunities.

On the issue of the proposal for splitting days-at-sea (DAS) allocations between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, the PDT recommended deferring both the regional DAS allocation and the DAS carryover modifications to be considered as 2026 work priorities. Staff then shared that the PDT recommended using a three-year moving average for LPUE, noting that this approach captures short-term

variability more accurately than a five-year average. Staff added that FY 2027 biomass projections were not yet available, limiting their ability to evaluate long-term implications.

Staff also reviewed other elements of Framework 40, including default specifications for FY 2027, part-time limited access allocations, the distribution of LAGC IFQ access area trips, NGOM TAL and sub-area set-asides, and RSA compensation fishing. The PDT recommended not establishing separate set-asides for NGOM sub-areas within this framework and instead considering that as a 2026 work priority. The PDT also did not recommend reducing the RSA set-aside, noting uncertainty in the federal grant cycle and outstanding multi-year awards. Staff noted uncertainty in the federal grant cycle and existing multi-year awards, and the PDT did not recommend changing the RSA set-aside in FW40.

Discussion: Committee members asked whether the PDT discussed next planning steps for the New York Bight (NYB) closure and the Nantucket Lightship South and North areas, and whether the NYB could be considered for future access. Council staff reported that the PDT did not make a recommendation regarding the NYB closure because of uncertainty in the 2025 survey data relative to fishing effort in that region afterwards, as well as trade-offs between protecting small scallops in the region and exploitable biomass available to support open bottom fishing. There was also discussion on whether the PDT had identified a threshold fishing mortality (F) rate for DAS calculations. Council staff stated that updated reference points from the Research Track Assessment (RTA) provide a starting point for that conversation. On Georges Bank, an F of 0.29 represents the upper end of the open-bottom rate under consideration. In the Mid-Atlantic, the PDT lacks confidence in the existing reference point from the 2025 Research Track Assessment. The combined F_{ABC} of 0.36 remains the legal upper bound for setting catch.

One Committee member commented on the use of a three-year average for LPUE calculations and questioned how it would avoid previous issues with overestimation. Council staff explained that the three-year average is based on observed fishery LPUE rather than past model projections, which should improve accuracy given recent revisions to the LPUE model. Another Committee member commented on how heavy open-bottom fishing in the Nantucket Lightship – West in May and June affected the estimates of LPUE. Council staff noted that the PDT has not analyzed the effect of the fishing effort in the Nantucket Lightship – West relative to the open bottom more broadly. Staff indicated that forthcoming model estimates from the 2025 SAMS run are expected to align with current observations. Staff further noted that the revised SHMW equations from the RTA already incorporated more conservative assumptions, and the Committee may not need to impose additional restrictions when developing specifications.

The Committee also discussed issues related to the Research Set-Aside (RSA) program and other management measures under Framework 40. A Committee member asked whether, if the Council leaves the set-aside unchanged, there would be an opportunity to reduce it after final action in December. Council staff said they were uncertain but believed the Council could weigh in between the proposed [rule](#) and final rule if desired. There was also a question as to whether there had been any discussion about expanding existing RSA projects. Council staff responded that negotiations to expand existing projects may be possible, but only for RSA projects with current multi-year awards through 2026. One Committee member asked how the 736,000 lb of unused RSA allocation would be treated. Council staff clarified that those pounds would remain unfished and are excluded from landings projections.

Committee members considered the scallop in-shell possession limit. Council staff explained that the Council could request a change, which would be a straightforward regulatory revision by the Regional Office, but such a change would require additional analysis to assess the effects on fishing behavior and the economics of the NGOM fishery. The PDT does not currently have the capacity to perform this analysis due to the loss of NOAA staff support.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund)** asked whether RSA pounds are included in DAS calculations. Council staff clarified that all projections are developed exclusive of RSA set-asides
John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund) asked whether there is a ‘drop-dead’ date for the Council to consider additional SAMS runs, and whether the NEFSC could halt the action after the Council took final action in December. Staff answered that the Council is not bound to use of the SAMS model for spatial management decisions, and that the current analysis is based on SAMS model estimates from NEFSC staff. Staff then outlined three possible scenarios: 1) if new SAMS runs arrive before the next AP and Committee meeting, they could be used to inform the AP, Committee, and Council’s decisions; (2) if they arrive after preferred alternatives are chosen but before document submission, they could be included in the preliminary submission; (3) if the shutdown continues past the preliminary submission, no further updates would be made.

Fishery Specifications for FY 2026 and FY 2027 (default)

2. MOTION: HANSEN/PAPPALARDO

This includes Motion 3 from the Advisory Panel.

Move that the Committee tasks the PDT to develop the following alternatives in FW40 that allocate access area trips and DAS to the Limited Access fleet in the following manner:

Run	1
DAS	32, 34, 36
Access Areas and Trips	None
FT LA possession limit	N/A
Trading Increment	N/A
FT LA allocation	N/A
PT allocation, possession limit and access area	N/A
LAGC IFQ Trip Allocation	N/A
Rotational Closures	Nantucket Lightship South and North, Area II
Open Bottom	Area I, NYB, Elephant Trunk, HCS, all other areas not listed above.
FY2027 Default	75% of FY2026 DAS, no access area trips

Rationale: An increase in the number of DAS would allow for greater flexibility and allow for LA vessels to spread out their effort across the resource. Resource contained in Access Areas is borderline for dedicated AA trips and natural mortality is uncertain.

Discussion: A Committee member requested clarification on the range of F rates represented by the motion. It was explained that analyses presented at the AP meeting the previous day used an assumed LPUE of 1,400 lb and incorporated the updated SHMW equation, which reduced biomass estimates relative to earlier assessments. It was added that the revised SHMW relationship reflects approximately a 5–6% reduction in biomass, rather than the 20% reduction associated with the older SARC 65 equation. Under the modeled alternatives, 38 DAS corresponded to an overall F of 0.25 and an open-bottom F of

0.29, while 36 DAS corresponded to an overall F of 0.24 and an open-bottom F of 0.37. Committee members discussed how the revised SHMW equation scales down biomass estimates and the implications for catch and effort. One Committee member commented that a similar scaling in other fisheries, such as menhaden, has led to reductions in quota and effort, and expressed concern that 38 DAS may be too high. Another Committee member agreed that 38 DAS was excessive and encouraged consideration of what constitutes a sustainable fishery in future years.

Council staff confirmed that the RTA data show declining meat weights at a given shell size and reiterated that the revised SHMW equation better reflects current biological conditions. Committee members emphasized balancing sustainability with maintaining economic viability for the fleet.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to remove the 38 DAS option from the original motion. Committee members then asked whether the PDT would provide updated mortality data assuming all effort occurred on Georges Bank. Council staff replied that the PDT could provide that information if requested, but this concentration of effort was not expected in FY 2026.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** commented that fishing mortality rates should be the focus instead of the number of DAS. He noted that an F of 0.39 for open bottom and 0.25 overall under 38 DAS would not be excessive compared to historical levels, particularly without access areas.
- **John Quinn** supported the motion and agreed that the proposed F rates are at the lower end of values observed over the past decade. He noted that in recent years, extensive access-area opportunities have increased time on bottom, but with those areas closed, fishing time declines by about 25%. He added that DAS are largely self-regulating, resulting in less high-grading and more efficient, protective fishing behavior.
- **Ronnie Enoksen (Eastern Fisheries)** agreed with the previous commenters, observing that the removal of access areas changes fishing behavior by spreading vessels out and reducing pulse fishing.
- **Kyle Grant (NGOM Fisherman)** expressed support for the motion and requested that Council staff provide follow-up analysis showing what DAS levels would have looked like using 2025 data with Areas I and II open as bottom. Council staff agreed to provide that analysis.

MOTION #2 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

3. MOTION: HANSEN/PAPPALARDO

This includes Motion 1 from the Advisory Panel.

Move that the Committee tasks the PDT to develop the following alternatives in FW40 that allocate access area trips and DAS to the Limited Access fleet in the following manner:

Run	2
DAS	34
Access Areas and Trips	Area I (Sliver + A1), 9,000 lb
FT LA possession limit	9,000 lb
Trading Increment	N/A
FT LA allocation	9,000

PT allocation, possession limit and access area	3,600 lb trip to Area I
LAGC IFQ Trip Allocation	100% of trips allocated to Area I.
Rotational Closures	Nantucket Lightship South and North, Area II, Elephant Trunk
Open Bottom	NYB, HCS, all other areas not listed above.
FY2027 Default	75% of FY2026 DAS, no access area trips
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain boundaries of the Area I transit corridor • All areas would close to LAGC fishing once the LAGC IFQ trips (800 lb) have been taken.

Rationale: The industry's experience fishing in Area I in FY 2025 suggests that there is still sufficient exploitable biomass in the area to support access area in FY 2026. An access area trip in Area I would allow for greater opportunities for the LAGC IFQ component.

Discussion: Some Committee members expressed concern over the high number of DAS in the motion. Council staff explained that the intent of the motion is to establish a limited range of alternatives and that including DAS values at this stage would be beneficial for analysis. Committee members proposed including bookends for the range of possible DAS. One Committee member suggested using a range from 24 to 34 DAS so the Committee could select a final value at its next meeting.

One Committee member asked whether trip trading would occur under this scenario. They were informed that if only one access area were selected, there would be no reason for trip trading.

Public Comment: None

3a. MOTION TO AMEND: BRAWN/SMITH

This includes Motion 1 from the Advisory Panel.

Move that the Committee tasks the PDT to develop the following alternatives in FW40 that allocate access area trips and DAS to the Limited Access fleet in the following manner:

Run	2
DAS	24, 34
Access Areas and Trips	Area I (Sliver + A1), 9,000 lb
FT LA possession limit	9,000 lb
Trading Increment	N/A
FT LA allocation	9,000
PT allocation, possession limit and access area	3,600 lb trip to Area I
LAGC IFQ Trip Allocation	100% of trips allocated to Area I.
Rotational Closures	Nantucket Lightship South and North, Area II, Elephant Trunk
Open Bottom	NYB, HCS, all other areas not listed above.
FY2027 Default	75% of FY2026 DAS, no access area trips

Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain boundaries of the Area I transit corridor • All areas would close to LAGC fishing once the LAGC IFQ trips (800 lb) have been taken.
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Discussion: A Committee member commented that adding multiple DAS options will give the Committee more information to work with when choosing alternatives.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #3A CARRIED 9-0 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS

MOTION #3 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

4. MOTION: HANSEN/PLATZ

This includes Motion 1 from the Advisory Panel.

Move that the Committee tasks the PDT to develop the following alternatives in FW40 that allocate access area trips and DAS to the Limited Access fleet in the following manner:

Run	3
DAS	24, 30
Access Areas and Trips	Area I (Sliver + A1), 6,000 lb trip Elephant Trunk, 6,000 lb trip
FT LA possession limit	12,000 lb
Trading Increment	6,000 lb
FT LA allocation	12,000
PT allocation, possession limit and access area	4,800 lb, either Area I or Elephant Trunk
LAGC IFQ Trip Allocation	100% of trips allocated to Area I or Elephant Trunk. IFQ access area trips would need to be fished in Area I and/or Elephant Trunk
Rotational Closures	Nantucket Lightship South and North, Area II
Open Bottom	NYB, HCS, all other areas not listed above.
FY2027 Default	75% of FY2026 DAS, no access area trips
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain boundaries of the Area I transit corridor • All areas would close to LAGC fishing once the LAGC IFQ trips (800 lb) have been taken.

Rationale: The industry's experience fishing in Area I in FY 2025 suggests that there is still sufficient exploitable biomass in the area to support a 6,000 lb access area trip in FY 2026. There is also sufficient biomass in the Elephant Trunk to support a 6,000 lb trip. An access area trip in Area I would allow for greater opportunities for the LAGC IFQ component.

Discussion: Some Committee members raised concerns about enforcing a 12,000 lb possession limit across multiple access areas and noted challenges for vessels with multiple permits that cannot operate simultaneously. Committee members discussed biological conditions in the ET and Area I. Council staff explained that both areas continue to show signs of elevated natural mortality. Staff described the trade-

off between allowing additional growth in these areas versus losing biomass if natural mortality remains high.

The group considered whether allocating access area trips this year was appropriate. Several Committee members expressed concern that assigning access area trips could increase high-grading, while management under DAS would likely reduce that behavior. One Committee member posed a question to industry asking if it would be financially preferable to keep ET as open bottom rather than designate it as an access area. They were informed that when access area trips are offered, the areas are typically fished intensively until allocations are exhausted, whereas under DAS, vessels tend to disperse effort more broadly. For both conservation and operational reasons, DAS management was viewed as the more sustainable option for the resource.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** asked whether there were any redundant alternatives that could be removed from consideration at this point in the specifications process.

MOTION #4 CARRIED 6-2 WITH ONE ABSTENTION

5. MOTION: HANSEN/PLATZ

Move that for alternatives that would revert Area I to open bottom in FY 2026,

FY 2025 carryover trips to Area I would be available to be fished beginning on April 1, 2026, with the 60-day carryover period beginning on April 1.

Rationale: This would allow vessels to continue finishing any remaining FY 2025 access area trips to Area I without needing to pause fishing until May 15th, and allow open bottom fishing in Area I earlier in the year following the 60-day carryover period. Scallop yields in CA1 did not appear to benefit from a delayed opening in FY2025.

Discussion: A Committee member noted that a previous motion had already selected Area I as an access area for the upcoming year and sought clarification on how this motion would interact with that decision. It was agreed that the motion should be considered conditional on Area I remaining open as the preferred access area. Some Committee members voiced concern over potential inequity issues related to carryover trips. One Committee member suggested allowing vessels that still held FY 2025 access area trips to fish before FY 2026 trips commence, while others noted that if the area is open, it is open to all participants and carryover would occur concurrently. It was acknowledged that historically, some vessels have lost out under such timing overlaps.

There was also concern about administrative uncertainty on the issue. It was noted that if the motion does not pass, vessels holding unutilized Area I access area trips from 2025 would be required to wait until May 15 to fish those trips, since trips issued in the previous fishing year would not automatically carry over to the new opening date. Staff clarified that the Council's preferred alternative in Framework 39 did not specify an end date, which resulted in an effective 45-day closure of Area I. It was agreed that this scenario was not clearly defined in current regulations.

Another Committee member expressed support for the motion on the basis of a precautionary approach but suggested that the Committee could postpone the decision until the next meeting to allow time for additional input from GARFO on how the regulation should be interpreted.

Public Comment:

- **Todd Bragdon (New Bedford Scallop)** commented that the delayed opening last year helped improve yield and that abandoning it without another trial would be premature. He added that weather conditions are better in May, supporting retention of the delay. There was some disagreement from a Committee member who opined that harvest quality is typically better in June, and pushing the opening to July 15 could be detrimental to the resource.
- **Brady Lybarger (Scallop fishermen, Cape May, NJ)** stated that opening Area I as open bottom would provide access roughly 45 days earlier, which was the intent of the motion. Mr. Lybarger added that during the previous year, Area II was opened later in the season, and maintaining a delayed opening now would be inconsistent with current specifications. Staff confirmed this and noted that the same restriction would also apply to carryover trips in Area II, which could not begin until May 15.
- **John Quinn** supported the motion but cautioned that, given the shutdown, this could be a year when April 1 approval might not occur. He explained that last year's delayed opening was designed to remain in place until explicitly changed and questioned how that would function if the Council removed the delayed opening but implementation of the final rule was delayed past April 1.

5. MOTION TO TABLE: PAPPALARDO/GATES

The Committee moves to table Motion 5 until the November 20th Scallop Committee meeting.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION #5 TO TABLE CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

MOTION #5 TABLED

6. MOTION: PLATZ/PAPPALARDO

The Committee moves to task the PDT to analyze the current level of rollover DAS held by the scallop fleet to inform committee discussion on best practices regarding rollover Scallop DAS as a percentage of total available DAS. This would be analyzed in conjunction with analysis to support separate DAS allocations to Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic.

Rationale: The level of DAS carryover currently permitted represents a substantial amount of management uncertainty that could be reduced. While not currently an issue due to current levels of DAS carryover utilization, further analysis is warranted.

Discussion: A Committee member noted that rollover has not been a significant problem historically, explaining that carryover has remained relatively consistent at about four to six days per vessel each year. They cautioned that reducing carryover too aggressively could impose an unnecessary constraint on the fishery. Another Committee member responded that it would still be prudent to examine rollover levels over multiple years to better understand their cumulative impact. They said that analyzing rollover alongside potential separate allocations for Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic would help identify whether changes might be needed in the future.

Public Comment: None

6. MOTION TO TABLE: PLATZ/PAPPALARDO

The Committee moves to table this motion until discussion of 2026 work priorities.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION #6 TO TABLE CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

MOTION #6 TABLED

NGOM TAL for FY 2026 and default Set-Aside for FY 2027

The Committee discussed management considerations for the NGOM under Framework 40. A Committee member noted that the Council passed a management uncertainty action in December and asked about the implementation plan for that measure. They expressed concern that the current NGOM default specifications are higher than what is being analyzed in Framework 40 and requested clarification on whether in-season adjustments or other responsive management options would be available. Council staff explained that the specifics of implementation have not yet been developed but confirmed that the Regional Administrator would have the authority to conduct an in-season action if necessary. Committee members emphasized that the scallop fishery has not previously had an in-season adjustment mechanism and agreed it should remain a consideration going forward, particularly if implementation delays occur beyond April 1.

7. MOTION: SMITH/BRAWN

Move to task the PDT to continue analysis to develop an alternative for a FY2026 NGOM TAL applying an $F=0.25$ for Stellwagen ONLY within the NGOM management unit.

Rationale: For the previous two frameworks, the NGOM TAL was determined using a blanket F-rate value using survey information from Stellwagen plus additional outlying areas that were surveyed in NGOM. For FY2024, the NGOM set-aside was calculated using biomass estimates from Stellwagen, Ipswich and Jeffreys. For FY2025, the NGOM set-aside was calculated using biomass estimates from Stellwagen, Ipswich, Jeffreys and Machias Seal Island. However, in both scallop seasons – the primary focus of effort was on Stellwagen Bank resulting in a higher realized F rate due to the concentrated effort. By adding additional survey areas, the poundage that could be taken from Stellwagen was artificially inflated. Recognizing that the scallop resource on Stellwagen is comprised of older animals with little signs of recruitment and knowing that the realized effort will again focus on Stellwagen, specifying an $F=0.25$ is to counterbalance the mismatch between actual and realized F.

Discussion: A Committee member asked whether a separate motion would be developed for the remainder of the NGOM management unit. It was clarified that the proposed $F = 0.25$ applied only to Stellwagen Bank and did not preclude harvesting in other NGOM areas. Several Committee members expressed a preference for establishing two separate NGOM management areas but indicated general support for the motion because the proposed approach was conservative and effort would primarily concentrate on Stellwagen.

One Committee member questioned why harvesting on Stellwagen should be constrained if there were no small scallops to protect. Council staff reported that size-frequency projections for 2026 indicate an average shell size of approximately 135 mm. The Committee member responded that, given those sizes, the fishery should consider harvesting the area more heavily. They were informed that legally, the NGOM

F rate cannot exceed 0.25. They were further cautioned that without two designated areas, all effort would likely occur on Stellwagen and the importance of maintaining a precautionary approach was emphasized.

Public Comment:

- **Kyle Grant** agreed with Committee member Togue Brawn, stating that it is frustrating to face another year without an implemented boundary line dividing the NGOM. He said two separate areas are needed to manage F appropriately across the region. Mr. Grant also noted that although effort is concentrated on Stellwagen, the fleet has consistently overperformed in recent years. He added that there has not been a strong seed set for several years and described the Western Gulf of Maine closure as a de facto sanctuary. He encouraged harvesting existing biomass while scallops remain at optimal size.
- **Carl Huntsberger (Maine DMR)** noted that the size-frequency data were based on dredge survey results but that drop-camera imagery from Stellwagen this year showed a notable cohort of one-year-old scallops, indicating recruitment in the area.

MOTION #7 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

8. MOTION: SMITH/BRAWN

Move to task the PDT to continue analyses creating two separate sub-management areas for the Northern Gulf of Maine, with option 2 "Southern NGOM up to 42°35'N" with an $F=0.25$ and "NGOM Other" with a $F=0.18$. The areas would be staggered in their openings, with the "Southern NGOM" opening on April 1 and the "NGOM Other" opening after the projected closure of the "Southern NGOM."

Rationale: The goal of moving towards subunits within NGOM was discussed in Amendment 21 when NGOM reached the point of having consistent annual surveys. One major benefit of having defined subunits each with their own specific F rate is to avoid the situation that occurred on Stellwagen Bank during FY2025 – effort was concentrated on Stellwagen Bank and since most of the poundage available to the fishery was removed from Stellwagen Bank, the realized F rate was considerably higher than the specified $F=0.18$. The other areas contributed to the TAL but were not fished at $F=0.18$ as intended. This mismatch of effort results in cumulative poor management decisions that can greatly reduce the exploitable biomass and impact the recovery time for scallop beds. Separate subunits within the NGOM is needed to spread effort across the management unit a prescribed and orderly pace as determined by preferred F rates. This continued tasking would greatly benefit from discussions with our GARFO counterparts, however. If federal partners are not available to weigh in on these discussions, then the PDT should stop work on this alternative analysis.

Discussion: A Committee member asked about the rationale for selecting $F=0.18$. It was explained that this was the rate proposed in the original motion from September. The intent was to balance recruitment and adult biomass by applying a lower F in areas off of Stellwagen Bank. Committee members noted that, due to current 9 year old cohort of scallops on Stellwagen Bank, FY2026–2027 may represent the last productive period on Stellwagen and that by FY2027, fishing effort would likely shift to other areas of the NGOM.

Committee members discussed the timing of this analysis given the ongoing government shutdown. One Committee member noted that since the PDT's ability to conduct analyses is currently limited, further work on the motion could delay the timely opening of the NGOM fishery. The motion's sponsor acknowledged the challenge but emphasized that the issue has been repeatedly deferred due to external circumstances and should move forward even if delayed consideration is required. It was confirmed that, should the motion move forward, the PDT could analyze the proposal but recommended establishing a deadline for new work. Committee members agreed to use November 10 as the cutoff date for further PDT analysis related to this.

The group also discussed the potential benefits of the proposal for distributing fishing effort across the NGOM. One Committee member noted that the area is large and providing additional fishing days would allow vessels to spread out and operate more efficiently.

Public Comment:

- **Todd Bragdon (Scalloper)** commented that NGOM management should move away from the current derby-style fishery toward assigning individual quotas per vessel, which would enable more even distribution of effort.
- **Ben Martens (Maine Coast Fishermen's Association)** supported the motion with the caveat that, if work cannot proceed due to the government shutdown, the proposal could be added to the 2026 priority list once operations resume.
- **Kyle Grant** expressed support for the motion, noting that the Committee has discussed this issue for multiple seasons without progress and that the PDT should be given the opportunity to advance the analysis.

MOTION #8 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

9. MOTION: SMITH/BRAWN

Move to task the PDT to include a default option for FY2027 NGOM set-aside that is 50% of the FY2026 NGOM set-aside with no FY2027 NGOM TAL.

Rationale: The current default value for FY2026 NGOM set-aside is a higher amount of pounds than any of the options proposed for FW40. There have been delays in implementation of prior annual frameworks. Choosing a lower default value for the management of NGOM would avoid future instances where the default value was higher than preferred value in the updated specification package.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION #9 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

RSA Compensation Fishing

10. MOTION: HANSEN/SMITH

Move that the Committee task the PDT with developing an alternative in FW40 that limits FY2026 RSA compensation fishing to areas available to the Limited Access DAS specified in Framework 40, and the Northern Gulf of Maine up to 25,000 lb.

Rationale: If access area trips are allocated as an alternative in Framework 40, they are unlikely to be able to sustain RSA compensation fishing.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION #10 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

AGENDA ITEM #2: 2026 WORK PRIORITIES

Council staff reviewed the current list of 2026 scallop work priorities and summarized ongoing items that remain under development from Framework 40 and related analyses. Staff invited the Committee to provide additional input on potential new priorities for consideration in the upcoming year.

The Committee discussed the concept of permit stacking as a potential 2026 work priority to address efficiency, profitability, and over-capitalization within the scallop fleet. Some Committee members noted that permit stacking has been debated for more than a decade and was originally raised in response to economic pressures that still persist. Some Committee members stated that stacking would provide only temporary relief and could accelerate fleet consolidation if not considered within a broader restructuring of how fishing effort and access are organized in New England. Others said the discussion should extend beyond the scallop fishery to examine how total sustainable value is distributed across all fisheries.

Emphasis was also placed on the need to look ahead to FY 2026 and FY 2027, noting that changes in environmental and market conditions make it increasingly important to evaluate whether permit capacity and fishing effort remain aligned with the resource. Some pointed to lessons from other fisheries, such as monkfish, where restrictions on stacking were viewed as limiting profitability. Committee members discussed the balance between allowing consolidation to improve efficiency and maintaining equitable access for smaller operators. Council staff added that there was likely capacity on the 2026 work priorities list currently to consider a larger management action.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** supported revisiting permit stacking, noting growing bipartisan support within the City of New Bedford and arguing that prohibiting stacking leaves vessels idle for much of the year.
- **Jeff Kaelin** opposed stacking, citing current resource conditions and stating that management should focus on biological sustainability rather than fleet restructuring.
- **Todd Bragdon** opposed the concept, noting that roughly half of permits are owned by individual operators and that stacking would primarily benefit large firms. He suggested that stacking should instead allow General Category permits to be combined on existing vessels without complex partnerships.
- **Kelly Stanislawzyk (Scallop vessel owner)** supported stacking, explaining that it would not increase permits or days at sea but would allow existing permits to be fished more efficiently on one vessel, improving viability for smaller businesses.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

11. MOTION: PLATZ/PAPPALARDO

The Committee moves to add as a 2026 draft work priority to analyze the current level of rollover DAS held by the scallop fleet to inform committee discussion on best practices regarding rollover Scallop DAS as a percentage of total available DAS. This would be analyzed in conjunction with analysis to support separate DAS allocations to Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic.

Rationale: The level of DAS carryover currently permitted represents a substantial amount of management uncertainty that could be reduced. While not currently an issue due to current levels of DAS carryover utilization, further analysis is warranted.

Discussion: A Committee member opined that rollover has remained consistent at roughly four to six days per vessel and has not posed a major management concern. Another Committee member responded that it would still be prudent to examine rollover trends over multiple years to avoid future effort shifts.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #11 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

12. MOTION: SMITH/BRAWN

Move to add the following to the list of potential 2026 priorities:

1. Modification to the in-shell scallop possession limits in NGOM
2. Work towards creating sub-management units in NGOM (also listed in Scallop Strategic Plan)
3. Separate, regional allocations of Limited Access Days-at-sea using the 71°W boundary as a dividing line.

Discussion: Committee members asked how the Committee should proceed once the Strategic Plan is finalized. Council staff explained that the plan is intended to guide development of annual work priorities and can serve as a standing reference list from which the Committee may draw specific recommendations for future work.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #12 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

13. MOTION: HANSEN/PLATZ

Recommend that the Committee add the following as scallop work priorities in 2026:

1. Resume development of a scallop rotational area on the Northern Edge (Closed Area II – North HAPC)

Rationale: Based on the reduced state of the scallop resource on Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, allowing access to the Northern Edge would allow for additional access area fishing opportunities to the scallop fleet. Due to the age of the current exploitable cohort in the Northern Edge, the scallop fleet should have access to these animals before they die of natural mortality.

Executive Order 14276 "Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness" by reducing regulatory burdens ... is tailor made for this action and it could possibly be thrust upon the Council if no action is taken.

Discussion: Committee members noted that previous work on this issue had been paused because it was not achievable under prior guidance, but that it may now be appropriate to revisit the topic given changes in federal priorities and regulatory direction. Members agreed that the new EO provides an opportunity to reexamine prior analyses and determine whether additional collaborative work with the Habitat Committee would be warranted.

Public Comment:

- **John Quin** supported the motion, stating that the new EO and administration justify revisiting prior work. He noted that substantial effort had been invested before the Council suspended the

action, so much of the foundational analysis already exists. He added that Council membership has changed since that time, and new perspectives should be considered.

- **Drew Minkiewicz** also supported the motion, noting that the Council has not yet addressed this EO for the scallop fishery. He said revisiting the Northern Edge action could help reduce regulatory burden and create new opportunities for the fleet.
- **Elizabeth Etrie (Conservation Law Foundation)** opposed the motion, stating that the proposed priority falls within the Habitat Committee's purview and that no new information has been presented since the Council voted to stop work. She emphasized that the Council's original decision was based on the ecological importance of the area and that those considerations remain valid.

MOTION #13 CARRIED 5-1 WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS

14. MOTION: PLATZ/BRAWN

Recommend that the Committee add as a work priority for 2026:

- Consideration of measures that would address fleet and individual vessel efficiency, profitability, and the issue of over capitalization throughout the scallop fleet to include, but not limited to, stacking and leasing.

Rationale: This priority would address issues brought before the Scallop Committee in a more comprehensive way.

Discussion: None

Public Comment:

- **Peter Hughes (Atlantic Cape Fisheries)** supported the motion and raised a financial question about whether banks could take ownership of permits in foreclosure cases, cautioning against corporate control of permits.
- **Jeff Kaelin** reiterated opposition, emphasizing that operators diversify their businesses through multiple permits and that revisiting stacking would be an extensive and unnecessary process given the state of the resource.
- **Todd Bragdon** said he was open to future discussion but objected to the term "capitalization", asking whether it implied a buy-back or similar program.

MOTION #14 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT.

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 3:18PM



New England Fishery Management Council

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

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Plan Development Team

Webinar

October 30th & November 7th 2025

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) met on October 30th & November 7th, 2025 at 9:30AM via webinar to: 1) Discuss Framework 40, including specifications and 2026/2027 fishery projections; 2) Address Scallop Committee (Committee) tasking from October 22, 2025 meeting; 3) Receive a presentation on the development of a scallop species distribution model; 4) Discuss other business as necessary.

OCTOBER 30TH MEETING ATTENDANCE

Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; ME DMR: Carl Huntsberger; VIMS: Dr. David Rudders; SMAST: Dr. Adam Delargy; College of William and Mary: Dr. William DuPaul; RI DEM: Chris Parkins; MA DMF: Kelly Whitmore

Also present were Council Staff Robin Frede, Scallop Committee Chair Melanie Griffin and 12 members of the public

NOVEMBER 7TH MEETING ATTENDANCE

Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; ME DMR: Carl Huntsberger; VIMS: Dr. David Rudders; SMAST: Dr. Adam Delargy; CFF: Tasha O'Hara; College of William and Mary: Dr. William DuPaul; RI DEM: Chris Parkins; MA DMF: Kelly Whitmore

Also present were Council Staff Julian Garrison and Michelle Bachman, Scallop Committee members Melanie Griffin (Chair) and Melissa Smith, Dr. Chris Haak (Monmouth University) and 11 members of the public.

AGENDA ITEM #1: FRAMEWORK 40

Staff began by reviewing the Committee's October 22nd tasking and summarizing the full suite of Framework 40 alternatives. This included upcoming decision points, analyses still in progress, and areas where additional PDT guidance was needed to support development of FY 2026 specifications and related management measures.

Overfishing Limit and Acceptable Biological Catch

For Section 4.1, the PDT recommended Alternative 4.1.2, Updated overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for FY 2026 and FY 2027, as the preferred alternative, noting that updating the OFL and ABC estimates using the most recent survey information considers the best available science.

Northern Gulf of Maine Management and TAL setting

Staff reviewed the NGOM TAL setting alternatives under consideration in Framework 40, including one alternative which would split the NGOM into two sub-areas with separate catch limits for the LAGC fishery and staggered openings. The PDT discussed the feasibility of implementing this structure by April 1 for FY 2026 and the risks associated with the high default NGOM set-aside if Framework 40 is delayed.

PDT members noted that the government shutdown had effectively halted progress on analyses required for Alternative 3, making it unrealistic to complete within Framework 40. PDT members recalled that the Committee had already acknowledged this issue and established a November 10, 2025 deadline, after which work on Alternative 3 would cease if no additional materials were available. One PDT member asked whether, if Alternative 3 were removed, the Advisory Panel (AP) or Committee could still choose to adopt a TAL using a single F across the entire NGOM. Staff confirmed that this would be possible by moving Alternative 3 to “considered but rejected” and replacing it with a streamlined, single-area alternative. PDT members expressed general agreement with moving away from Alternative 3 for this action.

The PDT also discussed the condition of the Stellwagen Bank scallop resource. PDT members noted that shell-height distributions indicate an older cohort with limited remaining growth. Because future growth potential is low, a PDT member suggested that Stellwagen may be able to sustain some fishing pressure without substantial loss of future yield and recommended that the Council explicitly consider natural mortality when considering a fishing mortality rate. Another PDT member highlighted the strong economic incentives that continue to concentrate effort on Stellwagen Bank, including consistently higher prices and higher catch rates relative to other NGOM areas. As a result, vessels are unlikely to explore the northern portion of the NGOM.

PDT members also noted that the FY 2027 defaults are higher than all other alternatives under consideration. If the action is delayed and defaults remain in place for an extended period, it is possible the entire default could be harvested, which may trigger accountability measures in FY 2027. In recent years, the NGOM set-aside has been harvested within only a few weeks. Given the possibility that Framework 40 will not be implemented by April 1, PDT members questioned how landings could be limited to reflect Alternative 2 if the default NGOM set-aside (507,063 lb) were to be implemented. Staff explained that constraining harvest under default measures falls under NOAA’s authority. Staff emphasized that the more focused and streamlined Framework 40 is, the lower the likelihood that defaults will be triggered.

One PDT member expressed strong support for the Committee’s recommendation to reduce the FY 2027 NGOM defaults to 50% of the FY 2026 values. They cautioned, however, that if the NGOM TAL is set across the entire management unit, including areas outside Stellwagen, the actual fishing effort on Stellwagen Bank would be much higher than implied by the overall F. Under Alternative 3, they estimated that roughly 70% of the available biomass on Stellwagen could be harvested, which would have negative localized biological impacts.

Council staff asked about the potential economic effects of a lower NGOM set-aside from Alternative 2 and a PDT member responded that a reduced set-aside would make it a harder choice for vessels to travel to the NGOM, as many operators rely on that harvest to supplement income. Some vessels might instead choose to remain closer to home, which could offer benefits by generating additional information from under-sampled parts of the management unit.

A PDT member asked whether the Committee had considered the possibility that the federal dredge survey may not occur if the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is not released. While this was not a discussion that the Committee had, The PDT agreed that the availability and reliability of survey data are important considerations when evaluating whether a separate NGOM sub-areas could be supported in FY 2027. It was noted that the 2026 Maine DMR survey is uncertain, which would lead to a lack of coverage of Machias Seal Island. The rest of the NGOM area would be surveyed by the SMAST drop camera in 2026.

Overall, the PDT supported the concept of splitting the NGOM into multiple sub-areas but agreed that this work should be deferred to a 2026 work priority rather than pursued within Framework 40.

Fishery Specifications

The PDT reviewed the range of specification alternatives for Framework 40, including spatial alternatives and associated days-at-sea (DAS) and access-area allocations. It was noted that updated reference points from the Research Track Assessment differ from those used in earlier frameworks (e.g., Framework 36), and that productivity assumptions for the stock have changed accordingly. Staff also presented recent auction data and market-grade information.

On October 30th, PDT members discussed the tradeoffs between maintaining access-area trips and shifting to a DAS-only approach for FY 2026. Several PDT members expressed concern that allocating access area trips this year could concentrate effort in a few areas with an uncertain outlook in 2026 due to expectations of increased natural mortality, and could lead to high incidental mortality due to high-grading in areas with relatively low catch rates. Multiple PDT members considered a DAS-based approach as more self-regulating, as vessels would move away from areas where catch rates were lower, while acknowledging that not allocating access area trips would temporally shift the fishery away from the goals of rotational management. The PDT discussed whether redistribution of effort under DAS fishing could self-regulate as suggested. One PDT member observed that exploitable biomass appears proportionally higher in the New York Bight and Hudson Canyon South than in Georges Bank open areas, suggesting that only allocating DAS could naturally redistribute effort.

The PDT also discussed declining meat yields, considering whether low yields reflected genuinely smaller shell sizes, vessels harvesting smaller scallops, or seasonal declines in condition. While several PDT members reaffirmed the value of rotational management in principle, they noted that the rotational options available for FY 2026 are limited. One PDT member noted that the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) component has historically always had some form of rotational opportunity and suggested that any IFQ-only access windows could be scheduled to overlap with the 60-day carryover period for Areas I and II, with open-bottom fishing beginning only after the carryover window closes.

The PDT agreed on October 30th to revisit the specifications discussion at the November 7th meeting. At that meeting, PDT members selected 34 DAS with no access areas (Alternative 3) as their preferred alternative, describing it as a moderate, flexible approach consistent with current biological and operational constraints. PDT members noted that differences of only a few days-at-sea across alternatives were unlikely to materially affect biological or economic outcomes.

Access Area trip Allocations to the LAGC IFQ Component

A PDT member asked whether the LAGC IFQ component could access Area I during the first 60-days of FY 2026 when Limited Access vessels would be using their FY 2025 carryover trips. Council staff explained that if the delayed opening in Area I removed for FY 2026, should Area I revert to open

bottom, carryover trips would begin on April 1, with FY 2026 DAS starting after the 60-day carryover period. Under this structure, IFQ access to Area I would begin only after the carryover window closes.

Another PDT member noted that under Alternatives 5 or 6, IFQ access-area trips would occur only on Georges Bank, while under Alternatives 7 or 8, trips would occur in both regions, and that the number of IFQ trips should remain proportionate to the 5.5% share of the Limited Access allocation.

Economic Analysis

Dr. Naresh Pradhan presented the updated economic analysis for Framework 40, summarizing projected revenues, price patterns, and landings outcomes across the range of specification alternatives (Table 1). No PDT discussion followed.

Table 1. Economic Impacts of FW40 Specifications Alternatives (million lb; 2024 dollars).

	Alt SQ 24DAS 2x12k	Alt 1 NA 18DAS	Alt 2 32DAS 0AA	Alt 3 34DAS 0AA	Alt 4 36DAS 0AA	Alt 5 24DAS 9k	Alt 6 34DAS 9k	Alt 7 24DAS 2x6k	Alt 8 30DAS 2x6k
Landings	18.350	8.825	15.203	16.153	17.104	14.517	19.268	15.555	18.405
Revenue	\$296.951	\$148.079	\$248.981	\$263.591	\$278.094	\$238.357	\$310.728	\$254.399	\$297.790
Net Revenue (after Trip Cost)	\$264.964	\$133.172	\$222.479	\$235.434	\$248.280	\$213.054	\$277.143	\$227.285	\$265.707
Producer Surplus (PS)	\$182.950	\$61.819	\$143.890	\$155.810	\$167.623	\$135.212	\$194.132	\$148.312	\$183.633
Consumer Surplus (CS)	\$8.063	\$1.908	\$5.576	\$6.281	\$7.026	\$5.092	\$8.871	\$5.832	\$8.111
Total Benefits (PS+CS)	\$191.013	\$63.727	\$149.466	\$162.091	\$174.648	\$140.304	\$203.003	\$154.145	\$191.744
Difference from SQ on:									
Revenue	\$0	-\$148.87	-\$47.97	-\$33.36	-\$18.86	-\$58.59	\$13.78	-\$42.55	\$0.84
Net Revenue	\$0	-\$131.79	-\$42.48	-\$29.53	-\$16.68	-\$51.91	\$12.18	-\$37.68	\$0.74
Producer Surplus	\$0	-\$121.13	-\$39.06	-\$27.14	-\$15.33	-\$47.74	\$11.18	-\$34.64	\$0.68
Total Benefits	\$0	-\$127.29	-\$41.55	-\$28.92	-\$16.36	-\$50.71	\$11.99	-\$36.87	\$0.73
Economic Ranking		8	6	4	3	7	1	5	2

AGENDA ITEM #2: FLATFISH BYCATCH IN FY 2026

The PDT reviewed issues related to flatfish bycatch and the development of FY 2026 sub-ACL recommendations. Council staff noted that FY 2026 bycatch projections will not be available, which limits the ability to provide updated inputs to the Groundfish PDT.

One PDT member emphasized that the conditions that produced the recent overages in Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) yellowtail flounder and Georges Bank yellowtail are unlikely in FY 2026. They added that limited rotational access in Nantucket Lightship South could potentially return in FY 2027. They highlighted the mismatch between where the SNE/MA yellowtail flounder accountability measure (AM) area is located and where the fishing occurred that triggered the AM, and stated that the PDT should consider ways to incentivize fishing in the Mid-Atlantic to reduce these conflicts.

A PDT member asked whether Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail had undergone a recent assessment. They were informed that a data update and assessment were completed this fall, and that the stock continues to decline. It was added that the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) chose to hold the ABC constant in the first year because of concerns about overly optimistic projections and the influence of an environmental covariate driving the decline. Also noted was that nearly all catch of the stock comes as bycatch in the scallop fishery, and therefore the SSC recommended minimizing catches without unduly constraining the scallop fishery.

Council staff then summarized the options for setting the FY 2026 scallop sub-ACL for this stock, explaining that under existing policy the scallop sub-ACL is set at 90% of projected catch. Without projections, the Groundfish PDT lacks a number on which to base the 2026–2028 sub-ACLs. Staff outlined two potential values for 2026: keeping the Status Quo of 5,952 lb or using the recent catch average (2023–2024) of 2,635 lb. The PDT supported continuing to apply the existing policy that the scallop sub-ACL for SNE/MA yellowtail flounder should be based on 90% of projected scallop catch.

AGENDA ITEM #3: ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT - SCALLOP SPECIES DISTRIBUTION MODEL

Council staff gave a brief overview of the ongoing 2026 work priority to update Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) designations for scallops. They reviewed the general EFH designation process and the methods used for species with both modeled and non-modeled pathways. It was clarified that Atlantic wolffish already have sufficient data to support habitat designation and do not require additional model development. Also noted was that upcoming EFH designation updates in 2027 will focus on salmon and red crab.

Dr. Chris Haak (Monmouth University) presented on preliminary work on a scallop species distribution model intended to integrate both trawl and dredge survey data, although the current model includes only NMFS trawl data. The model currently incorporates NMFS trawl survey data and hydrodynamic and environmental predictors (including chlorophyll as a proxy for productivity and bottom stress). Additional data sources, including dredge surveys and improved substrate and catchability covariates, are planned for later development. The goal is to produce a robust habitat-based tool for describing adult scallop distribution, with a parallel model for juveniles anticipated in a future phase.

The PDT discussed potential improvements and data needs for the model. There were suggestions for the addition of data from other long-running dredge and research surveys beyond that of NMFS. Also discussed was catchability differences between gear types, with a PDT member noting that dredges perform poorly on muddy substrates where trawls perform better. It was agreed that substrate type should be included as a predictor or covariate.

A PDT member also highlighted that the difference seen between the *R/V Albatross* and *R/V Bigelow* is likely temporal. It was agreed that adding a temporal effect into the model may help reconcile differences in model-predicted densities. Another PDT member asked about the treatment of size selectivity. Dr. Haak clarified that the current model focuses on adult scallops, with juveniles to be modeled separately.

There was interest in incorporating additional environmental predictors, particularly those related to food availability productivity. On environmental predictors, Dr. Haak added that work is being done in collaboration with UMass School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) to estimate tidally driven and wave driven stress on the seabed as separate variables that are not yet in the model. One PDT member also expressed interest in comparing outputs from this model overlayed on the scallop management areas to investigate discrepancies between hotspots on the model compared to the current observed distributions of animals.

With no other business, the October 30th meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:15AM, and the November 7th meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:20PM.