

## Preliminary Goal and Objectives for Joint Habitat/Scallop Action on Northern Edge

For review by Habitat and Scallop Advisory Panels and Committees, March 21-29, 2023

Developed by Council staff, and revised following discussions with the Habitat PDT, February 22, 2023 and Scallop PDT via correspondence. Revised during the joint Habitat-Scallop PDT meeting on March 14, 2023.

### Goal:

1. Develop a scallop rotational harvest program within and/or around the Closed Area II Habitat Closure Area (i.e., “habitat management area” or “HMA”) that minimizes adverse effects to vulnerable essential fish habitats and optimizes scallop yield.

### Objectives:

1. Establish a scallop access area or areas. These area(s) may be located within and/or outside the existing Closed Area II Habitat Closure Area, including in areas that are currently open to the scallop fishery. Consider both the distribution of scallops and maintaining protection of habitats that are highly vulnerable to dredge fishing impacts and provide functional value for managed fishery resources.
2. Review current HMA boundaries and consider whether modifications are necessary.
3. Develop a scallop rotational harvest program, including the geographic extent, duration, and frequency of scallop dredge activity relative to habitat and recovery time on the Northern Edge.
4. Manage harvest from the Northern Edge scallop resource in the short- and long-term by considering the size distribution of scallops, seasonality of fishing with regard to meat yield, spawning potential, and fishing behavior.
5. Develop management area boundaries that are enforceable. This may include developing additional monitoring requirements specific to this area.
6. Accurately monitor and minimize bycatch of non-target species.
7. To the extent practicable, consider gear interactions including between scallop dredges and lobster traps.

### Notes:

The Plan Development Teams’ discussion emphasized the importance of continued research in the Habitat Management Area and recommend that the Council consider future research needs for the HMA as it develops alternatives for this action.

“Northern Edge” refers to the region that includes the current HMA outlined in orange in Map 1 below, as well as surrounding areas of Georges Bank, including portions of the Northern Flank Scallop Area Management Simulator (SAMS) area (outlined in red) directly west of Closed Area II HMA. A scallop rotational area developed through this joint action could overlap with the HMA as well as the open area west of the HMA (see objective 2). Management areas are described in more detail in Table 1.

Future modifications of scallop rotational area boundaries outside the HMA could be accomplished via a scallop framework, without the need for a joint habitat/scallop action. The Plan Development Teams will work towards refining a spatial footprint within which alternatives will be developed.

Map 1 – The existing Closed Area II Habitat Management Area (orange outline) on the Northern Edge, relative to Scallop Area Management Simulator (SAMS) area boundaries (red outlines) and predicted scallop biomass from the 2022 HabCam survey of this region (kg per km<sup>2</sup>). The Closed Area II groundfish closure is outlined in blue. The Northern Edge Juvenile Cod HAPC described in Table 1 has the same boundaries as the HMA.

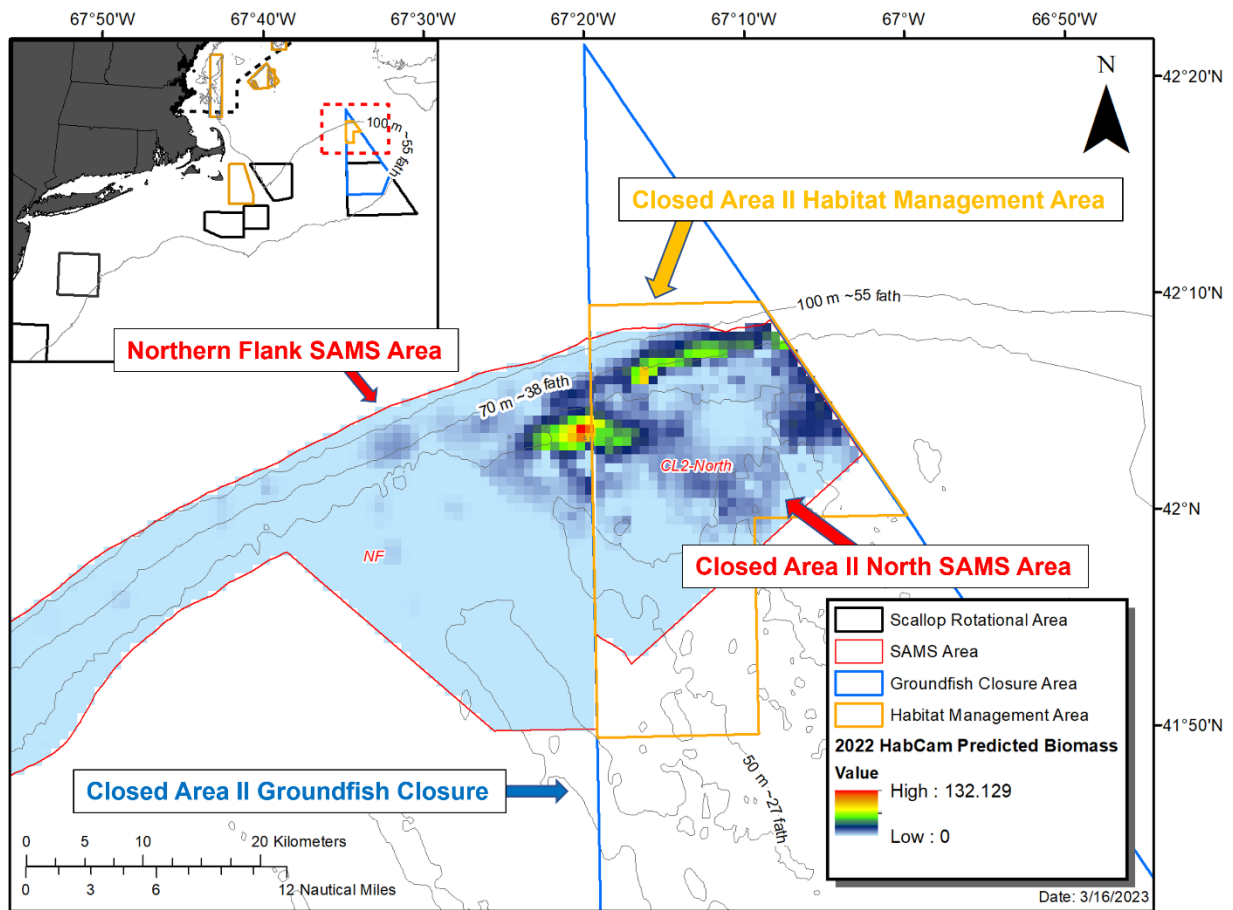


Table 1 – Summary of management areas on the Northern Edge.

Area(s)	Implementation date, action	Gear or other restrictions, if any
Closed Area II	Current boundaries established via Northeast Multispecies Amendment 5, Implemented year-round via emergency Secretarial Action, December 1994	Generally, closed to gear capable of catching groundfish. Exemptions for special access programs, non-groundfish gears, etc.
Northern Edge Juvenile Cod Habitat Area of Particular Concern	Omnibus EFH Amendment 1, 1998	None; HAPC designations identify issues of concern to support the EFH consultation process
Closed Area II Habitat Closure Area	Northeast Multispecies Amendment 13, 2003; Scallop Amendment 10, 2004	Closed to mobile bottom-tending gears, including bottom trawls, scallop dredges, clam dredges
Scallop Area Management Simulator Areas, Northern Flank, and Closed Area II North	Non-regulatory areas; updated periodically by NEFSC, with input from the Scallop PDT and groups who conduct scallop resource surveys	None; scallop resource conditions are summarized with respect to SAMS areas during specifications development.