



New England Fishery Management Council

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

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Plan Development Team

Webinar

September 5th & 9th 2025

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) met on September 5th and September 9th, 2025 at 9:00AM and 11:00AM via webinar to: 1) Discuss Framework 40, including 2025 survey data treatment, analysis and modeling decisions, and the fishery outlook for FY 2026; 2) Discuss other business as necessary.

SEPTEMBER 5TH MEETING ATTENDANCE

Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; GARFO: Emily Keiley, Benjamin Galuardi, Sharon Benjamin; NEFSC: Dr. Dvora Hart, Dr. Robert Murphy; 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 Scallop Committee members Melanie Griffin (Chair), Eric Hansen, Melissa Smith, and Ted Platz, along with Sally Roman (VIMS), Dr. Jui-Han Chang (NEFSC), Dr. Liese Seimann (CFF), and several members of the public.

SEPTEMBER 9TH MEETING ATTENDANCE

Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; GARFO: Emily Keiley, Benjamin Galuardi, Sharon Benjamin; Danielle Palmer; NEFSC: Dr. Dvora Hart, Dr. Robert Murphy; ME DMR: Carl Huntsberger; 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 Scallop Committee members Melanie Griffin (Chair), Melissa Smith, and Ted Platz, along with Sally Roman (VIMS), Dr. Jui-Han Chang (NEFSC), Dr. Liese Seimann (CFF), and several members of the public.

AGENDA ITEM #1: CONTINUE DISCUSSION ON SURVEY RESULTS AND DATA TREATMENT

Shell-Height Meat-Weight models

The PDT revisited Shell-Height/Meat-Weight (SH/MW) equations during the September 5 and September 9 meetings as a continuation of the August 27-28 PDT meeting. The discussions focused on how best to treat SH/MW relationships for survey biomass estimates and SAMS model runs, particularly in light of issues identified with the 2025 Research Track (RTA) equation. PDT members noted that the RTA formulation did not perform consistently across regions, producing lower biomass estimates on Georges Bank and higher ones in the Mid-Atlantic than expected.

Dr. Dvora Hart (NEFSC) presented an updated 2025 RTA SH/MW equation that corrected an error in the calculation of the mean year effect and incorporated additional data. The revised model included depth

and latitude covariates as well as area fixed effects, which improved performance by capturing differences across SAMS sub-areas. Comparisons with Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF) seasonal survey data from 2024-2025 indicated that the updated equation provided a better fit than the RTA equation and produced less biased estimates overall. Ultimately, the PDT decided to adopt the 2025 VIMS equation for Nantucket Lightship South, given that the area will not be allocated in FY 2026 and additional data will be available before reconsidering rotational access, and the revised 2025 RTA SH/MW equation with area effects for Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic areas.

2025 Survey Data Treatment

The PDT revisited the treatment of survey data for the Southern Flank (SF) to address concerns raised about a single high-density station that had been inflating biomass estimates. Dr. Jui-Han Chang (NEFSC) presented updated analyses using a 9x9 nm box centered on the station, which was subdivided into smaller grid cells to better account for spatial heterogeneity.

Dr. Hart added that when the SMAST data were expanded in the traditional way, the one dense station produced an unrealistically high estimate. Instead, she recommended using all available images within the 9x9 nm box to calculate an average density that more realistically reflects conditions in the area. This approach produced a density estimate of 14.9 scallops per m², compared to nearly 100 per m² when the single SMAST station was used to represent the entire grid cell. The PDT agreed to use this approach of substituting the adjusted estimate for the hotspot and then averaging it with the rest of the survey data as usual. There was also consensus that the decision should be clearly documented to explain why the PDT deviated from its default method of using a simple average of the survey estimates. The PDT added that while extreme heterogeneity of this type is unusual, similar situations have arisen in the past, and it would be worthwhile to consider developing standardized guidelines for how to handle anomalously high-density survey points in future assessments.

Modifications to SAMS Areas

The PDT reviewed survey data showing increasing densities of small scallops in the New York Bight (NYB) and considered whether a closure might be warranted to protect the recruitment event. There was discussion on the feasibility of modifying SAMS areas before developing initial projections, referencing the additional time and effort this would require. The PDT ultimately agreed not to modify SAMS areas for the initial OFL and ABC projections and decided to retain the 2025 SAMS configuration. The group agreed that if the Advisory Panel (AP) or Committee (CTE) provides tasking, the PDT could adjust the SAMS areas for that particular run.

Initial SAMS Runs

The PDT agreed to postpone developing the initial SAMS model runs until after the upcoming AP and CTE meetings on September 12 and 15, with the rationale that the remaining time was better directed toward resolving outstanding issues with growth, selectivity, and survey inputs, which need to be finalized before projections can be generated. The initial SAMS runs will be developed following tasking from the CTE at their September 15 meeting.

Next Steps

The PDT will calculate final combined survey biomass estimates using the revised SH/MW equation. All changes in methodology will be documented for inclusion in the memo to the SSC, including justification for deviations from the 2025 Research Track SHMW equations. Initial SAMS model runs will be prepared after growth and selectivity parameters are finalized, with outputs to be reviewed later in the process ahead of the SSC meeting on October 8th.

With no other business, the September 5th meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:00 AM, and the September 9th meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:30 PM.



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MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Joint Advisory Panel & Plan Development Team

Webinar

September 12, 2025

The Scallop Plan Development team (PDT) and Scallop Advisory Panel (AP) met via webinar on September 12, 2025 at 9:00AM to: 1) Review results of 2025 scallop surveys, and preliminary projections and develop input on the range of potential specification alternatives for FY2026 and FY2027; 2) Discuss social and wellbeing outcomes in catch share programs; 3) Discuss Scallop Work Priorities including the Long-Term Strategic Plan, LAGC IFQ review, and 2026 work priorities; 4) Discuss other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

Advisory Panel: James Gutowski (Chair), Cassie Larsen (Vice Chair), Kirby Aarsheim, Wesley Brighton, Derek Eilertsen, Jay Elsner, Brent Fulcher, Brady Lybarger, Michael Marchetti, Ben Martens, Chris Merl, Ed Mullis, Kristan Porter, Charles M. Quinn, Jr., Paul Vafides

PDT: Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros; GARFO: Emily Keiley, Benjamin Galuardi, Sharon Benjamin; NEFSC: Dr. Dvora Hart, Dr. Robert Murphy; ME DMR: Carl Huntsberger; SMASST: Dr. Adam Delargy; CFF: Tasha O'Hara; College of William and Mary: Dr. William DuPaul; MA DMF: Kelly Whitmore

Scallop Committee: Melanie Griffin, Melissa Smith, Matt Gates, Ted Platz, and Eric Hansen

Several members of the public were also in attendance.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Regarding Framework 40 (FW40): The AP passed several motions recommending the Scallop Committee (Committee) task the PDT with the development of SAMS runs for FW40. These runs focused on:
 - A single 12,000 lb trip to Area I and closures of Area II and NLS-S
 - Area I, NLS-N, NYB, HCS, and ET as open bottom. The AP was interested in maximizing the available open bottom area given the lack of rotational fishing opportunities.
 - Analysis to support allocating DAS separately between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank
 - Analysis of a closure in the NYB/Long Island region to protect recruitment
 - Analyzing the TAL for the NGOM at F=0.22 and F.25 of Stellwagen only and to analyze a TAL at F.18 of all areas in NGOM excluding Stellwagen.
- On the Scallop Strategic Plan, the AP provided suggestions on the prioritization of strategies,

- The AP received a presentation on Social and Wellbeing Outcomes in the LAGC IFQ fishery.
- Regarding other business:
 - The AP received a presentation on the Joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Council Omnibus Alternative Gear Marking Framework Adjustment.
 - The AP made a motion recommending that the Committee recommend that the Council send a letter to NOAA headquarters urging its immediate publication

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES

The meeting opened with a moment of memoriam for the late Kirk Larson, a longtime and valued member of the Scallop Advisory Panel.

Council staff then provided several updates. On the Scallop RSA program, staff explained that there has been no publication of the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Without it, there will be no 2026 Scallop RSA grant competition or awards beyond those already issued. There was a question about whether there were ways to circumvent the unpublished NOFO, but staff responded that although alternative approaches had been explored with the regional office, no viable administrative solution had been identified. An AP member raised concerns about how pounds allocated to the RSA set-aside would be handled in the absence of an RSA competition. Council staff indicated that the Council could opt not to set aside pounds beyond those necessary to fund ongoing awards, though modifications to the regulatory language might be required, and more analysis was needed.

Staff also provided a follow-up on compliance concerns raised regarding the 2025 Northern Gulf of Maine scallop fishery in response to the June 2025 Council motion. The PDT had worked with NOAA OLE to develop a data request to better understand the scope of the issues, but database and staffing limitations prevented NOAA OLE from fulfilling the request. While the immediate analysis was not possible, NOAA OLE acknowledged the Council's concerns and agreed to work toward developing a data structure that would allow for more useful fine-scale compliance monitoring in the scallop fishery in the future.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz (Fisheries Survival Fund)** asked about the possible use of exempted fishing permits (EFPs) in place of the federal grant process currently used to administer the Scallop RSA program. A representative from NOAA Office of General Counsel explained that, under a prior DOC GC determination, RSA pounds must be administered through the federal grants process.

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRAMEWORK 40

2025 Scallop Survey Results

The AP received a presentation from staff on the 2025 survey results and discussed spatial management for fishing year 2026. The presentation centered on the state of the scallop resource based on 2025 survey results, which indicated a continued decline in overall biomass. Georges Bank saw an increase in the Nantucket Lightship South (NLS-S) but declined in Closed Area I (CAI) and Closed Area II (CAII). In the Mid-Atlantic, biomass increased overall, driven by growth in the Elephant Trunk & Hudson Canyon South, and recruitment in New York Bight and Long Island. Due to limited survey coverage in some areas, paired with sporadic hot spots with high densities of recruits, there is substantial uncertainty in the biomass estimates for areas of Georges Bank. Surveys and L-F plots suggest there will likely be few opportunities for rotational access in FY2026 on Georges Bank, although recruitment was observed in the NLS, Southern Flank (SF), CAII-ext, CAII-North (HAPC), and Northern Flank (NF). In the Mid-Atlantic,

surveys observed higher survival in the southern areas, continued growth in the Elephant Trunk (ET) and HCS, and recruitment in the New York Bight (NYB) region.

Discussion: The group began discussing the implications for 2026 fishing opportunities. One AP member asked which areas seemed most viable for rotational fishing. Staff replied that the PDT had not identified any areas in Georges Bank that appeared promising. The PDT previously agreed that Area II had run its course and Area I was not performing well. Instead, Hudson Canyon South (HCS) and ET were identified as potential options for limited rotational fishing, though the scallops there were smaller than would typically be targeted. Another AP member suggested that there may still be opportunities in Area I, though concerns remained about poor meat yields. Others asked about biomass in the NLS-South and NLS-North areas, with Council staff noting that while these areas could provide strong rotational options in future years, scallops were still too small to support immediate access.

Following the discussion of NLS, attention shifted to the Mid-Atlantic, where the PDT highlighted conditions in ET and HCS. A PDT member added biological context to this issue, noting that natural mortality was the biggest concern in Mid-Atlantic areas, not growth. For that reason, concerns were raised about leaving the area closed for another year as this may result in the loss of what limited scallops are available if they die before they can be harvested. They recommended that ET and HCS be opened with a delayed mid-May opening as either an access area or open bottom. The reasoning is that this would allow the 4 year old cohort of scallops another six weeks' worth of growth.

The AP then briefly discussed the logistics of a delayed opening in Area I. Council staff informed that, in the case of a delayed opening, the area would open as a rotational access area until the end of the fishing year, close between April 1 and May 15, and then reopen for carryover fishing. If designated as open bottom in 2026, the area would first allow carryover fishing before reverting to open bottom in July. An AP member expressed skepticism, suggesting that delayed openings have been ineffective in the past.

Another AP member asked whether the Council could capitalize on the increase in biomass in the NYB before offshore wind development limits access. Staff explained that while recruitment had been observed there, closing the area to protect that recruitment event would reduce available open bottom biomass for the directed fishery and also affect opportunities in HCS and ET. The Northern Edge was also raised, though Council staff clarified that the area continues to be a Habitat Area of Particular Concern and prohibited to scallop gear, and therefore was not a viable option for rotational fishing.

Additional questions focused on NLS-S. One AP member asked VIMS staff to confirm how many year classes were present in the area and whether meat count data were available. VIMS staff responded that there was a single year class, and meat counts had not yet been finalized but could be provided later. The AP member provided a suggestion of dividing open bottom trips between the east and west sides of a designated management line, ensuring more balanced pressure across the resource.

Public Comment:

- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** asked whether the higher proportion of Days-at-Sea (DAS) used early in 2025 was the result of the effort in NLS-West. Council staff agreed that this was a reasonable assumption. They explained that a larger share of available DAS had been used earlier in the year, leaving proportionally fewer days for the remainder of the season. However, because overall DAS allocations in 2025 were higher than in 2024, the total numbers may ultimately look similar to the previous year.

Recommendations for initial SAMS Runs

1. MOTION: FULCHER/MULLIS

Recommend that the Committee moves to task the PDT to develop a rotational management option for consideration: (2 runs)

Run 1:

- Set FT LA trip limit at: 12,000 lb
- Allocate 1 trip to Area I
- DAS
 - DAS west of 72° 30' W
 - 12 DAS east of 72° 30' W

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII
- Open Bottom: ET, HCS, NYB

Run 2:

- Set FT LA trip limit at: 12,000 lb
- Allocate 1 trip to Area I
- DAS
 - 16 DAS west of 72 30
 - 12 DAS east of 72 30

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII, ET
- Open Bottom: HCS, NYB

Rationale: Runs to consider range of DAS options as well as effect of allocating DAS separately between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank, divided by the 72° 30' W line. Runs would consider access to Area I with 1x 12,000 lb trip.

Discussion: An AP member suggested creating an IFQ fishing option for Area I with a smaller trip limit for limited access vessels. Another AP member expressed skepticism about opening CAI as an access area, instead suggesting that it may be better as open bottom. They added that this would allow more flexibility while not forcing fishing on a low LPUE. Another AP member proposed that CAI should be analyzed for both limited access and general category vessels as an access area, with open area days split between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, suggesting 12 DAS on the Georges Bank side and 16 DAS on the Mid-Atlantic side. There was some discussion on the feasibility of splitting DAS in this way, however GARFO staff added that differential DAS was not impossible but would require major technical changes. Despite this, there was support from multiple AP members to investigate the potential spatial split of DAS. One AP member did voice concerns about the split and the implications of setting 28 DAS (16 + 12) without first seeing projections for 2026. Other suggestions that were not ultimately included in the motion: CAI reverting to open bottom, closing CAII, and closing off the high density of scallops within the NLS-S while making the rest of the area open bottom.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** recommended closing CAII and NLS-S and then drawing a dividing line to split Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, leaving both areas open for DAS without access areas.
- **John Quinn** proposed opening CAI as open bottom and creating a access area in the HCS.

MOTION #1 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

2. MOTION: MERL/MARTENS

Recommend that the Committee moves to task the PDT to develop a rotational management option for consideration: (2 runs)

Run 3:

- CAI available only for LAGC IFQ access area trips
- DAS at 24

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII
- Open Bottom: ET, HCS, NYB

Run 4:

- No Limited Access rotational fishing
- DAS at 24

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII
- Open Bottom: CAI, ET, HCS, NYB

Rationale: Runs to analyze access to Area I only for the LAGC IFQ component.

Discussion: The discussion began with an AP member noting that scallops in CAI had been heavily impacted by sea stars and questioning the value of maintaining access in an area where the biomass may not be reliable. Several AP members expressed opposition to the motion, noting the equity concerns that arise if access area fishing is designated to only one fishery. A suggestion was made to consider an amendment to the motion that would allow both components into the area if it were to open, however this was regarded as redundant to Motion #1.

Public Comment:

- **Kyle Grant (NGOM fisherman)** agreed with the equity concerns. He also proposed that ET and HCS be considered as an access area.

MOTION #2 FAILED 4-8 WITH ONE ABSTENTION

3. MOTION: LYBARGER/FULCHER

Recommend that the Committee moves to task the PDT to develop a rotational management option for consideration: (2 runs)

Run 3:

- No Limited Access rotational fishing opportunity
- DAS
 - 20, 24, 28

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII, NYB-Closure, ET
- Open Bottom: HCS, CAI

Run 4:

- No Limited Access rotational fishing opportunity
- DAS
 - 20, 24, 28

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII
- Open Bottom: HCS, ET, CAI, NYB

Rationale: Runs consider range of DAS options for analysis as well as the effect of closing an area in the NYB region to protect small scallops, and open ET to allow more area for open bottom fishing.

Discussion: An AP member suggested structuring runs to test scenarios where NYB was closed and ET was opened, or vice versa. Another member supported the idea but asked to keep NYB open with the exception of a closure around the area of small scallops. It was confirmed that a smaller, focused closure could be defined later on.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** asked whether splitting DAS regionally could improve flexibility. He stated that maintaining more open bottom, rather than relying on access areas, could reduce risks from high natural mortality and uncertain growth. He also asked whether DAS allocations could be more precise if the open bottom was divided. GARFO staff responded that while implementation hurdles existed, they were actively exploring the feasibility of such an approach.

MOTION 3 CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

4. MOTION: AARSHEIM/MERL

Recommend that the Committee moves to task the PDT to develop a rotational management option for consideration: (1 run)

Run 5:

- No Limited Access rotational fishing opportunity
- DAS
 - 30, 34, 38

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII
- Open Bottom: HCS, CAI, NYB, ET

Rationale: Allows additional flexibility to the LA component, allocating DAS equivalent to approximately 3 full FT LA trips.

Discussion: Several AP members voiced discomfort over the high DAS proposed in this motion. One cautioned that higher DAS would place additional pressure on open bottom areas and prevent a necessary recovery period. Another agreed, pointing to the previous year when an unanticipated, high-density bed of healthy scallops was quickly exploited. Some AP members expressed a desire to see the effects of these high DAS projections when split across the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank. Council staff confirmed that they would review the feasibility of splitting DAS allocations if that became part of the tasking.

Public Comment:

- **John Quinn** expressed support for the motion, stating that analyzing a wider range of DAS scenarios could highlight options for improving biomass outcomes.
- **Ron Smolowitz** asked about the impacts of dividing the open area, noting interest in comparing a scenario with 30 DAS spread across the open bottom relative to splitting DAS regionally.

MOTION 4 FAILED 5-7 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS.

5. MOTION: VAFIDES/FULCHER

Recommend that the Committee moves to task the PDT to develop a rotational management option for consideration: (1 run)

Run 6:

- No Limited Access rotational fishing opportunity
- DAS
 - 20, 24, 28

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, CAII
- Open Bottom: HCS, CAI, NLS-N, ET, NYB

Rationale: Recruitment event is largely contained within the NLS-S, and allowing access to the NLS-N would expand area available for fishing on a DAS.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION 5 CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

6. MOTION: MARCHETTI/MERL

Recommend that the Committee moves to task the PDT to develop a rotational management option for consideration: (1 runs)

Run 5:

- No Limited Access rotational fishing opportunity
- DAS
 - 18, 22, 26

Treatment of other SAMS areas

- Closed: NLS-S, NLS-N, CAII
- Open Bottom: HCS, ET, CAI, NYB

Rationale: Motion reflects the need to reduce fishing effort in the open bottom to conserve the resource.

Discussion: One AP member cautioned against tasking the PDT with too many similar analyses or those unlikely to be recommended by the Committee.

Public Comment: None

MOTION 6 CARRIED 10-2 WITH NO ABSTENTIONS

Part-Time Limited Access Vessels

Discussion: The AP agreed that the topic of where Part-Time Limited Access vessels and LAGC IFQ vessels could fish any access area trips will be addressed after the results of the initial SAMS runs are presented.

Northern Gulf of Maine

7. MOTION: PORTER/FULCHER

Recommend that the Committee task the PDT to analyze a TAL for the NGOM at $F=0.22$ and $F.25$ of Stellwagen only and to analyze a TAL at $F.18$ of all areas in NGOM excluding Stellwagen.

Rationale: One year class of scallops, continue with a conservative F .

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION 7 CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

8. MOTION: MARTENS/MERL

Recommend that the Committee task the PDT to analyze a TAL for the NGOM at F=0.18 and F.25 of all areas in NGOM.

Rationale: Analysis would consider biomass from all areas of the NGOM at a lower fishing mortality rate.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION 8 CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

AGENDA ITEM #3: SOCIAL AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES IN CATCH SHARE PROGRAMS

The AP received a presentation from Dr. Kanae Tokunaga from Gulf of Maine Research Institute and Melissa Errend of Northern Economics on their case study of the scallop LAGC IFQ program, modeling the impact of different management interventions on social and wellbeing outcomes. The presenters explained that their work sought to evaluate how different program design elements and management interventions in catch share programs affect social and wellbeing outcomes, beyond simply measuring economic efficiency. They noted that while catch share systems are designed to promote efficiency, they also influence the distribution of both social and economic outcomes across communities, sometimes with unintended adverse effects. Their study used a three-phase approach, beginning with a review of U.S. catch share programs to identify common interventions, followed by interviews and an industry survey, and culminating in the development of a Bayesian decision model. This model was used to simulate how interventions, such as accumulation limits, quota banks, leasing prohibitions, and community ownership of quota, can affect wellbeing outcomes in the LAGC IFQ fishery.

Discussion: During discussion, AP members reflected on the presentation and shared perspectives from industry experience. One AP member noted that if the interviews had been conducted three years earlier, the response rate might have been different, particularly regarding community ownership, and recalled how difficult the transition to catch shares had been for some participants. Another AP member asked what efficiencies were observed from the catch share model and whether there were any biomass benefits. The presenters explained that their model assumed the IFQ program as a baseline and used ACL trends and U10 landings as proxies for stock conditions. There was a question on whether catch share programs created new opportunities to enter the fishery and whether they provided broader management benefits. The presenters responded that one model run suggested slight improvements in upward mobility and fishing reliance when community quota was increased, but that further work was needed. Other comments reflected on past management approaches, comparing IFQ to quarterly quotas and open access, and noting how catch shares allowed greater flexibility for some but limited opportunities for others.

Public Comment:

- **Mary Beth Tooley (O'Hara Corporation)** asked which North Pacific catch-share fisheries had been examined for comparison, and the presenters responded that they had reviewed all of them. Ms. Tooley added that community quota programs did not seem to be widely used and that 2020 data could be skewed. The presenters clarified that quota ownership provisions can help hold

shares within communities, but further research is needed to evaluate how effective these interventions are at meeting social and wellbeing goals

AGENDA ITEM #4: 2025 SCALLOP WORK PRIORITIES

Long-Term Strategic Plan

Council staff presented the AP with an update on the progress of the Long-Term Strategic Plan, including the roadmap document that has been under development since June. Staff explained that the PDT had made minor revisions and added data since the last meeting, and the full plan is scheduled for final presentation at the December Council meeting. For this session, the AP was asked to provide input on the prioritization of strategies and to identify which items should be considered most urgent as the Council develops its 2026 work priorities.

Discussion: Discussion centered on how to rank objectives within the plan. AP members emphasized that in-season management should be treated as a high priority, given how often it arises in industry discussions and how important it is for day-to-day operations. Several AP members discussed the issue of splitting fishing effort, noting that work on dividing DAS in the limited access fishery parallels discussions about splitting quota in the Northern Gulf of Maine. They suggested these could be advanced together to improve both management and equity. Other AP members highlighted specific areas of concern for the fishery's future. One pointed out that the Northern Edge should be elevated within the plan, calling it critical to sustaining the fishery long term. Others discussed whether adjustments to DAS management should be moved up in priority, with some viewing it as an urgent issue and others cautioning that tinkering with DAS could put additional pressure on the resource. There was general agreement that the Strategic Plan should remain a "living document," with strategies reordered as conditions and fishery dynamics change from year to year

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** suggested that the plan's objectives should more clearly define the Council's role and identify which other parties need to be involved in achieving each strategy. He also emphasized the importance of quantifying predation impacts within the plan
- **John Quinn** highlighted that in-season management repeatedly comes up in industry discussions and should be ranked as a top priority. He also asked whether the topic was being addressed through the upcoming omnibus management flexibility action scheduled for September. Council staff replied by clarifying the distinction between the Council's Omnibus Management Flexibility Amendment and what still needs to be addressed specifically in the scallop plan. Ultimately, the omnibus provides the overarching authority, but the scallop FMP must establish the specific operational rules.
- **Kyle Grant** voiced support for expanding opportunities in the Northern Gulf of Maine, noting that it would benefit the fleet and broaden participation in the fishery

2026 Work Priorities

The AP received a presentation from Council staff on current Scallop work priorities, including progress on E.O. 14276: Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness. Staff presented the current draft list of recommendations and added that the Council is committing to developing work plan for final recommendations due to NOAA on September 30. Staff noted that motions from the AP for recommendations on 2026 work priorities would come at the October AP meeting when the draft list of 2026 work priorities would

Discussion: One AP member asked for clarification about the “bioeconomic model” referenced in the document and was told it likely referred to groundfish, not scallops. They also urged that in-person AP meetings be prioritized over webinars, adding that virtual formats often limit effective engagement.

Public Comment:

- **Ronald Smolowitz** questioned why removing habitat protections were not included in the draft list. Mr. Smolowitz pointed out that the recommendations suggest eliminating year-round habitat closures and replacing them with monitoring, and opined that if such closures remain, they should include sunset provisions. He suggested that unless there was a proven benefit to seafood production, year-round closures should be reevaluated. Council staff responded that questions about how the list was developed would be better directed to the full Council at its upcoming meeting.

AGENDA ITEM #5: OTHER BUSINESS

Joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Council Omnibus Alternative Gear Marking Framework Adjustment

The AP received a presentation from Caroline Potter (GARFO) on the joint framework action considering the use of alternative gear marking systems. In the presentation, it was explained that current gear marking requirements for fixed gear (such as buoys, radar reflectors, and high flyers) would remain in place, but the action would allow an additional method to mark gear digitally rather than through physical surface markers. The goal is to facilitate the eventual use of on-demand gear in restricted areas without persistent buoy lines, while ensuring that such gear can be located and identified by other fishermen. The presentation outlined potential alternatives, including requiring letters of authorization and educational components to ensure accuracy, as well as the concept of “functional equivalence,” where the Regional Administrator would approve any new gear marking system if it provides the same level of information as current surface markers.

Discussion: AP members raised concerns about the practicality of the proposal. Some AP members agreed that it may be unrealistic to assume that all fishermen would have internet access offshore, citing both the expense and unreliability of satellite internet. Other AP members added that expecting lobstermen to constantly update gear information online was also unrealistic. The AP ultimately agreed that this issue should not be implemented so quickly, and that more on-the-water testing is needed.

Public Comment:

- **Ronald Smolowitz** asked about liability in the event of a conflict between fixed and mobile gear, questioning whether fixed gear would have the right of way. GARFO staff clarified that no fishery has right of way under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and that questions of liability would continue to be handled through existing processes. They noted that the On-Demand Gear Conflict Working Group is exploring how to apply negligence standards in these situations.

Notice of Funding Opportunity

9. MOTION: FULCHER/MARCHETTI

Recommend that the Committee recommend that the Council send a letter to NOAA Headquarters urging the immediate publication of the 2026 Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Rationale: Without the 2026 NOFO, the RSA grant cycle would not move forward, negatively affecting scallop research and resource surveys that are critical to the management of the fishery.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION 9 CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 4:31PM.



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 Committee

Webinar

September 15, 2025

The Scallop Committee (Committee) met via webinar on September 15, 2025 at 9:00AM to: 1) Review results of 2025 scallop surveys, and preliminary projections and develop input on the range of potential specification alternatives for FY2026 and FY2027; 2) Discuss social and wellbeing outcomes in catch share programs; 3) Discuss Scallop Work Priorities including the Long-Term Strategic Plan, the LAGC IFQ review, and 2026 work priorities; 4) Discuss other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Melanie Griffin, MA (Chair), Michelle Duval, John Pappalardo, Togue Brawn, Melissa Smith, Travis Ford, Jake Wiscott, Matt Gates, Ted Platz, Eric Hansen

Council Staff: Connor Buckley, Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan

Scallop Advisory Panel: Jim Gutowski (Advisory Panel Chair), Thomas Coley

Several members of the public were also in attendance.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- Regarding Framework 40 (FW40): The Committee passed several motions directing the PDT to develop SAMS runs and additional analyses for consideration in Fishing Year (FY)2026/2027 specifications. These included:
 - Analyzing whether sub-area closures within ET, NYB, HCS, and LI could protect small scallops while allowing harvest of larger animals.
 - Analyzing a single 12,000 lb trip to Area I, or reverting the area to open bottom.
 - Exploring separate DAS allocations for Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, using the 71°W line as a boundary.
 - Analyzing the TAL for the NGOM at F=0.22 and F.25 using only Stellwagen and at F=0.18 using all areas in NGOM excluding Stellwagen.
- On the Scallop Strategic Plan, the Committee provided feedback on evaluation criteria, the frequency of progress reviews, and the prioritization of strategies.
- The Committee received a presentation on Social and Wellbeing Outcomes in Catch Share Programs.
- The Committee passed a motion recommending that the Council send a letter to NOAA headquarters urging the immediate publication of the 2026 RSA NOFO.

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES

The meeting opened with a moment of memoriam for the late Kirk Larson, a longtime and valued member of the Scallop Advisory Panel (AP). Council staff then provided several updates. On the Scallop RSA program, staff explained that there has been no publication of the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Without it, there will be no 2026 Scallop RSA grant competition or awards beyond those already issued.

Staff also provided a follow-up on compliance concerns raised in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) fishery at the June 2025 Council meeting. The PDT had worked with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) to develop a data request to better understand the scope of the issues, but database and staffing limitations prevented NOAA OLE from fulfilling the request. While the data request could not be completed, NOAA OLE acknowledged the Council's concerns and agreed to work toward developing a data structure that would allow for more useful fine-scale compliance monitoring in the scallop fishery in the future.

Discussion: On the 2026 NOFO issue, there was a question about what could be done at the state level to assist in the progress of this issue. While Council staff could not advise on this issue, it was agreed that there could be value in getting the involvement of local representatives. Questions also arose surrounding the issue of un-awarded Research Set-Aside (RSA) pounds if the NOFO is not published. Council staff responded that multi-year awards rely on RSA set-aside from upcoming years and do not entirely use RSA set-aside from the current fishing year. They added that, if there were not a 2026 grant cycle, there could be an alternative in the Framework to reduce RSA set-aside to a minimum amount required to fund the current multi-year awards. Committee members followed up by asking what the deadline would be for this kind of Framework adjustment. They were informed that this could possibly be a last minute adjustment.

Regarding compliance concerns in the NGOM, Committee members questioned what the next steps would be in addressing the issue. Council staff informed that the next steps could involve the Council's Enforcement Committee. Staff added that the primary challenge in NOAA OLE completing the data request was a lack of resources and the Committee agreed that this is an issue to stay aware of as they progress forward in addressing the NGOM concerns. One Committee member asked whether NOAA OLE was the only entity who would be able to do the data management necessary to provide a report. Council staff was unsure but noted it was likely that Council staff could provide a report if given access to the data.

AGENDA ITEM #2: FRAMEWORK 40

2025 Scallop Survey Results

The Committee received a presentation from staff on the 2025 survey results and discussed spatial management for fishing year 2026. The presentation centered on the state of the scallop resource based on 2025 survey results, which indicated a continued decline in overall biomass. Georges Bank saw an increase in the Nantucket Lightship South (NLS-S) but declined in Area I (CAI, CAI-N) and Area II (CAII-S, CAII-Ext). In the Mid-Atlantic, biomass increased overall, driven by growth in the Elephant Trunk (ET) & Hudson Canyon South (HCS-S), and recruitment in New York Bight (NYB) and Long Island (LI). Due to limited survey coverage in some areas, paired with sporadic hot spots with high densities of recruits, there is substantial uncertainty in the biomass estimates for areas of Georges Bank. Surveys and L-F plots suggest there will likely be few opportunities for rotational access in FY2026 on Georges Bank, although recruitment was observed in the NLS-S, Southern Flank (SF), CAII-Ext, CAII-

North (HAPC), and Northern Flank (NF). In the Mid-Atlantic, surveys observed higher survival in the southern areas, continued growth in the ET and HCS, and recruitment in the NYB region

Discussion: A Committee member asked whether biomass calculations were done using the Research Track Assessment (RTA) shell-height/meat-weight (SH/MW) equations and whether it made a significant difference. Council staff replied that the PDT had to revise the RTA equation, so the estimates provided are from the final PDT approved SH/MW equation. As far as the difference in results, Council staff responded that this model still suggests a reduced weight-at-size on Georges Bank relative to the SARC 65 equation. However, this was consistent across each iteration of the SH/MW equation for Georges Bank.

One Committee member asked if nearly half of all scallops were concentrated in NLS-S, and Council staff confirmed this was the case. The Committee supported keeping the area closed, and another Committee member asked where additional recruitment was observed. Staff responded that Georges Bank had small hotspots on the SF and NF, while the Mid-Atlantic showed recruitment in the NYB and off LI. One suggestion for protecting these high-density areas without closures was to use a VMS geo-fence notification to alert vessels to the presence of small animals, with early messaging to the fleet also recommended. This idea received support, with an additional suggestion for a small closure if necessary. When asked about the Council's role in implementing geo-fencing, staff clarified that such measures are handled by GARFO, though language for a notification could be developed with Council input.

Discussion then turned to Area I. Committee members observed that 2025 survey biomass looked low overall, but there were still moderate densities of exploitable scallops. Staff emphasized that while densities of exploitable scallops were present, yield was poor, and natural mortality was likely high due to sea star predation. Council staff added that Area I has historically had poor yield and high densities of sea stars. Some Committee members echoed concerns about sea star predation and urged harvesting before the scallops were lost to natural mortality. Some Committee members asked whether delaying the transition of Area I to open bottom by one year could help protect recruitment, though staff cautioned that high natural mortality in the area might reduce harvest if access were postponed. A Committee member echoed this concern and supported harvesting in this area. Council staff then confirmed that if Area I were opened under Framework 40, the timing would follow the carryover period, reopening May 15 after the delayed opening and then reverting to open bottom after 60 days. In response to questions about recent harvest, staff estimated that around 900,000 pounds remained available in Area I. Regarding Area II, staff reported that the Northern Edge saw a decline in larger scallops, and surveys observed higher densities of incoming recruits, averaging around 64 mm shell-size. In CAII-Extension, one to two year classes were present at around 80–90 mm, but declines in larger animals were also apparent.

Finally, Committee members asked whether the Committee needed to draft a motion on adding an alternative considering modifications to the Scallop ABC control rule to allow the SSC to deviate from it when recommending Scallop OFLs and ABCs. Staff responded that the issue could and should wait until the October 22 Committee meeting.

Public Comment:

- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** raised concerns about the major biomass declines tied to the SH/MW equation change. Staff explained that declines were due both to the revised equation and to survey results, with area-specific differences. Dr. Quinn asked whether last year's equation could be applied to this year's data to show the difference, but staff cautioned this would not meet the best available science standard and would delay the process.
- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund)** noted the challenges created by the lack of a base run for comparison and emphasized the importance of transparency in how the SH/MW

equation change affects biomass estimates. He stressed that the Magnuson Act standard is to use the “best available science,” which does not always mean the most recently developed approach. Mr. Minkiewicz also commented that the 2025 survey results do not clearly identify strong access area opportunities and suggested that, under these uncertain conditions, management may benefit from greater reliance on DAS allocations. He added that keeping areas such as the Sliver open as bottom could provide more flexibility for the fleet.

- **Tom Coley (Scallop PDT)** Supported opening Area I as open bottom and asked about the <35 mm recruitment event on the Northern Flank. Council staff replied that overall numbers had declined there, and the PDT had not flagged it as an exceptional event, though hotspots existed and could be reviewed if the Committee wished.

AP Chair Report

Scallop Advisory Panel Chair Jim Gutowski provided a brief summary of the previous day’s AP meeting. There was one question from a Committee member on the decision to use 72° 30’ as the dividing line between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic. It was agreed that 71° may be a more appropriate delineation.

Initial SAMS Runs

1. MOTION: HANSEN/BRAWN

Task the PDT to analyze ET, HCS, NYB, LI and refine an area to protect recent scallop settlement.

Rationale: The current areas were designed to protect a different cohort and the survivability of the larger scallops currently protected is uncertain.

Discussion: A Committee member asked if the intent was to capture recruitment hotspots within these areas while still maintaining access to mature scallops. The maker of the motion confirmed that was the objective. Another Committee member asked if there were additional areas that should be included in the analysis, but the Committee agreed to defer any expansion of the list to a later motion.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #1 PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

2. MOTION: PLATZ/PAPPALARDO

Task the PDT to analyze the NF and SF to better ascertain size distribution and biomass density distinctions between the two areas to refine an area to protect scallop settlement.

Rationale: The NF has a higher density of pre-recruited animals relative to the SF, which 2025 surveys suggest hold a greater proportion of fully-recruited scallops.

Discussion: None

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** voiced support but cautioned that unprecedented mortality levels in 2025 mean the analyses should incorporate a risk factor to account for rapid change on the water.

MOTION #2 PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

3. MOTION: HANSEN/GATES

Task the PDT to perform a SAMS run including one, 12,000 lb. trip to Scallop Access Area 1 for the LA fleet, and the corresponding historical percentages to the LAGC and part-time fleet.

Rationale: There is enough biomass currently in this area to support harvest and delaying would jeopardize survival due to the heightened presence of starfish and other predators.

Discussion: During discussion, one Committee member noted that Area I is already open under a 12,000-lb trip and asked about the success rate so far. Council staff responded that while they had not heard reports of incomplete trips, yields have not been excellent, with many trips landing 20s or 30s rather than full loads. Concern was expressed that recent trip limits had not consistently been met in the past two years and cautioned that harvesting in Area I could lead to incidental mortality of younger scallops. It was suggested that a lower trip limit, such as 8,000 or 10,000 lbs, may be more appropriate. The Committee was reminded that, at the current stage in the framework specifications process, these motions are for analysis and can be adjusted later on.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz** supported the motion. He explained that even though there is hesitation around access areas, a broad range of analyses is necessary to give decision-makers the best possible information.
- **John Quinn** supported the motion and stressed that Area I faces unprecedented predation pressures. Mr. Quinn stated that regardless of the approach, scallops in Area I should be harvested before they are lost to natural mortality.

MOTION #3 PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

4. MOTION: HANSEN/PAPPALARDO

Task the PDT to perform SAMS runs including 18, 24, 30, and 36 DAS with NLSS, NLSN, and Access Area 2 closed. (all other areas open, no AA trips)

Additional runs with same above data: (individually and combined)

Newly defined closure to protect small scallops in the Mid Atlantic (closed)

Rationale: With no Access Area trips allocated and an uncertain concentration of scallops in CA1, a larger target for DAS is justified.

Discussion: A Committee member expressed support but questioned whether the newly defined Mid-Atlantic closure referenced in an earlier motion should also be included here. Others responded that this could be considered at a later stage, and staff clarified that both the small scallop closure in the Mid-Atlantic and provisions for Area I were already captured by earlier motions. Clarification was requested on the meaning of the “no access area trips” provision. It was explained that this would serve as the base run, closed to access area trips, while DAS ranges within the motion would still be considered. Another Committee member asked whether DAS numbers could be adjusted later without being locked to specific values, and it was confirmed that the motion defined only upper and lower bounds, leaving flexibility for refinement. Some Committee members voiced concerns over the upper bounds of the analysis, expressing that they could not support analysis with such high DAS limits.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz** supported the motion, stating that leaving all but Area II and Nantucket Lightship South open as bottom and dividing Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic at 71°30' might be the most practical approach under current uncertainties. He added that, in this context, 36–38 DAS should not be viewed as excessive.
- **John Quinn** also supported the motion, noting that under the current system, vessels with 24 DAS and two access area trips effectively fish 46–48 days. He argued that even 36 DAS in a no-access-area scenario would represent a significant reduction in effort.

MOTION #4 PASSED 5-3 WITH ONE ABSTENTION

5. MOTION: HANSEN/PAPPALARDO

Task the PDT to calculate DAS separately for GB and Mid Atlantic using the current turtle chain demarcation of 71 Degrees West longitude. The open bottom fishing mortality rates in each region would be analyzed at the regional F_{ABC} from the 2025 Research Track Assessment.

Rationale: Georges Bank has been the focus of harvest for the last few years and would benefit from a break. The waters in the Mid-Atlantic have recently been cooler and surveys have shown an increase in abundance.

Discussion: Clarification was requested on whether the proposed Georges Bank to Mid-Atlantic ratio could be adjusted, and it was explained that the ratio originated with the AP and could be modified as needed. A Committee member asked for a specific run that would tie Georges Bank effort to an F rate of 0.36, noting concern that Georges Bank could otherwise be overfished if managed as a stand-alone region. Another Committee member supported this addition, pointing out that the SSC had cautioned Georges Bank would be considered overfished if treated separately from the Mid-Atlantic. Staff confirmed that such a run could be prepared for SSC review.

Public Comment:

- **Brady Lybarger (Scallop fishermen, Cape May, NJ)** Agreed with the concept of splitting Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic but cautioned that determining the right proportion of DAS between east and west requires additional analysis.

MOTION #5 PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

6. MOTION: SMITH/PAPPALARDO

	NGOM 1	NGOM 2
F rate for NGOM TAL	F=0.20, F=0.25	F=0.18
Areas to be used	Stellwagen only	All NGOM excluding Stellwagen

Rationale: Scallops on Stellwagen are approaching 8 years old and need to be harvested. Having separate runs would set NGOM up for specific area management, but also still allow flexibility to retain a single TAL approach. After reviewing the 2025 season, it appears that realized F on Stellwagen exceeded the maximum F=0.25, so this tasking is to identify how to correct previous decisions to ensure a balanced approach to harvesting.

Discussion: A Committee member suggested that the Stellwagen closed area boundary, previously vetted by OLE and used in FW36/A21, could be a useful line for splitting Northern Gulf of Maine TALs. Others recommended that, given the decline in biomass and abundance, the PDT or SSC conduct a post-mortem comparing expected and realized F rates after the season. Several Committee members expressed support for this idea.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #6 PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

AGENDA ITEM #4: SOCIAL AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES IN CATCH SHARE PROGRAMS

The Committee received a presentation from Dr. Kanae Tokunaga from Gulf of Maine Research Institute and Melissa Errend of Northern Economics on their case study of the scallop LAGC IFQ program, modeling the impact of different management interventions on social and wellbeing outcomes. The presenters explained that their work sought to evaluate how different program design elements and management interventions in catch share programs affect social and wellbeing outcomes, beyond simply measuring economic efficiency. They noted that while catch share systems are designed to promote efficiency, they also influence the distribution of both social and economic outcomes across communities, sometimes with unintended adverse effects. Their study used a three-phase approach, beginning with a review of U.S. catch share programs to identify common interventions, followed by interviews and an industry survey, and culminating in the development of a Bayesian decision model. This model was used to simulate how interventions, such as accumulation limits, quota banks, leasing prohibitions, and community ownership of quota, can affect wellbeing outcomes in the LAGC IFQ fishery.

Discussion: A Committee member noted that the survey received 32 responses and asked about the total potential data pool. The presenters replied that outreach was conducted to all permit holders, roughly 100 in total, and that they were satisfied with the 32 percent response rate. Another Committee member asked about the spatial spread of respondents, and the presenters reported that most responses came from Massachusetts but that the geographic distribution was reasonably broad. They added that repeating the survey over time could reveal how spatial patterns and perceptions evolve.

Clarification was requested on next steps. The presenters explained that they intend to continue refining the model, exploring additional scenarios, and ensuring that the outputs are applicable to Council processes. A Committee member asked whether they had studied other quota-managed fisheries where quota price was low or the stock underperformed. The presenters noted that while their current work was focused on the IFQ scallop fishery, their model allows for “what if” scenarios that can explore different economic contexts. They also explained that the model was based on data from 2020–2024, a period marked by particularly dynamic conditions, and acknowledged that additional “middle of the road” years would strengthen results. Another Committee member emphasized the importance of considering a broad range of economic case studies before relying heavily on speculative “what if” scenarios.

Finally, a Committee member observed that as the model and paper are finalized, some of the findings could inform the scallop strategic plan, particularly under Objective 6, which focuses on economic viability.

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #4: 2025 SCALLOP WORK PRIORITIES

Long-Term Strategic Plan

Council staff presented the Committee with an update on the progress of the Long-Term Strategic Plan, including the roadmap document that has been under development since June. Staff explained that the PDT had made minor revisions and added data since the last meeting, and the full plan is scheduled for final presentation at the December Council meeting. For this session, the Committee was asked to build on input provided by the Advisory Panel on the prioritization of strategies and to identify which items should be considered most urgent to address. Staff noted that this work would inform recommendations for 2026 priorities for scallop-related work at the October and November Committee meetings.

Discussion: The Committee agreed on the importance of establishing clear evaluation criteria that link back to each objective and recommended that the Strategic Plan also provide details on ongoing work related to each strategy. It was also suggested that progress should be reviewed annually even if some strategies involve multi-year work.

One Committee member identified certain strategies under Objective 1 as the most critical and noted that the earlier suggestion for post-mortem analyses, which would evaluate expected versus realized fishing mortality at the end of a season, ties directly into the in-season management objective. Another Committee member agreed with the Advisory Panel’s prioritization of strategies within Objective 1 but added that certain strategies are interdependent and should be advanced together.

The Committee also discussed how the Scallop Strategic Plan Roadmap document aligns with the ongoing management flexibility amendment. Clarification was requested on the overlap, and staff explained that the omnibus amendment is intended to give the Regional Office the authority to make in-season adjustments outside of the Council process. However, triggers for those adjustments would still need to be written into the scallop FMP to ensure they are applied consistently

Public Comment: None

2026 Work Priorities

The Committee received a presentation from Council staff on current Scallop work priorities, including progress on E.O. 14276: Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness. Staff presented the current draft

list of recommendations and added that the Council is committing to developing work plan for final recommendations due to NOAA on September 30.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #5: OTHER BUSINESS

Scallop Research Set-Aside Notice of Funding Opportunity

The Committee concluded its business by discussing the ongoing delay in the publication of the 2026 Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Notice of Funding Opportunity. Committee members expressed concern that without a NOFO, no projects could be funded for the 2026 fishing year.

6. MOTION: HANSEN/SMITH

Recommend that the Council send a letter to NOAA Headquarters urging the immediate publication of the 2026 Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Rationale: Without the 2026 NOFO, the RSA grant cycle would not move forward, negatively affecting scallop research and resource surveys that are critical to the management of the fishery

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

MOTION #6 PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT WITH ONE ABSTENTION

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2:23PM



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DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Plan Development Team

Webinar

September 30, 2025

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) met on September 30th, 2025 at 1:00 PM via webinar to: 1) discuss issues related to the development of Framework Adjustment 40; 2) Review preliminary OFL and ABC estimates for Georges Bank, Mid-Atlantic, and the Gulf of Maine; 3) Develop PDT memo to the SSC re: OFLs and ABCs for FY 2026 and FY 2027 (default); 4) discuss other business as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Connor Buckley (PDT Chair), Chandler Nelson, Jonathon Peros, Dr. Naresh Pradhan; GARFO: Emily Keiley, Danielle Palmer, Benjamin Galuardi; NEFSC: Dr. Dvora Hart, Dr. Robert Murphy; ME DMR: Carl Huntsberger; VIMS: Dr. David Rudders; SMAST: Dr. Adam Delargy; College of William and Mary: Dr. William DuPaul; MA DMF: Kelly Whitmore.

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

AGENDA ITEM #1: FRAMEWORK 40

The PDT began with an overview of Framework 40 and the tasking from the September Committee, and Council meetings. Council staff reviewed the timeline, including the October SSC meeting, the next AP and Committee meetings in New Bedford, and the December Council meeting. They also noted the risk of a government shutdown on October 1, 2025, which could delay completing SAMS runs to support the Committee's tasking. GARFO staff confirmed that the CAMS database would remain accessible.

Georges Bank and Mid-Atlantic

The PDT then discussed the tasking related to regional allocation of Limited Access DAS between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic. Members reviewed recent effort data, which showed that in 2025 about 78% of effort occurred on Georges Bank and 22% in the Mid-Atlantic. A PDT member noted that this distribution may naturally rebalance in 2026, since the predominant Mid-Atlantic year class observed in recent surveys will be four years old and exploitable, and therefore greater fishing effort may take place there than in previous years. Council staff added that the PDT should carefully consider whether allocating DAS by region is worth the added complexity and potential downsides, such as higher trip costs and increased swept area.

PDT members discussed possible modeling approaches to analyze regional DAS allocations. One PDT member asked how the SAMS model would handle scenarios that assume one entire region was closed and the other open, in order to analyze DAS separately by region. They were informed that the SAMS

model could be set to assume one region closed and calculate fishing mortality in the other, but uncertainty remained about how vessels would redistribute effort under those conditions. Further clarification was requested on how the analysis would be structured. One PDT member asked if moving forward with a regional split would affect where the LAGC fishery can harvest their quota, and Council staff confirmed it would not. Another PDT member suggested that higher DAS allocations would make separate allocations. It was agreed that having more DAS provides flexibility, however some PDT members did note an upper limit that they would feel comfortable suggesting for DAS allocations. Council staff added that examining higher DAS allocations could also help illustrate how trips might be divided under a split scenario, though they emphasized the need to examine how high catch rates would look under a rotational management scenario without rotational fishing. A PDT member stressed that if DAS are split between Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, carryover days should not be permitted into the following year, as that would be confusing. Council staff agreed that eliminating carryover would simplify management but noted that there were other options, including splitting 2025 DAS by the same proportion used for 2026 DAS. Staff also noted that the Strategic Plan considers modifying the Limited Access DAS carryover provision. Emphasis was placed on challenges that are posed if the model runs become too complex. Workload constraints and a potential government shutdown make it important to keep the approach simple. GARFO staff added that making DAS tradable between regions would require substantial programming changes and could not be implemented for April 1, though it might be possible in a future scallop framework action.

Northern Gulf of Maine

The PDT also discussed the Council's request to examine splitting the NGOM management unit into two separate sub-units with separate TAL's - Stellwagen Bank North and NGOM Other. A PDT member commented that this split would be easier to implement if it did not require changes to SAMS area boundaries. PDT members reviewed potential boundaries for these sub-units. One option was the boundaries set in FW32 with a 1 nm buffer area. The second option was a straight boundary across 41° 35'N. It was agreed that the latter option would be the most straightforward from both an implementation and management perspective. This was supported by GARFO staff who added that NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) could handle the split as long as both areas did not operate concurrently. They added, however, that NGOM will open under default specifications on April 1. So any delay in the framework could lead to challenges in enforcing this area split. Council staff stressed that this work should not distract from higher-priority tasks and suggested it may be more appropriate to defer to FW41 if time is short. There was one question about the treatment of NGOM Research Set-Aside (RSA) whether it too would be split. A suggestion was made that, for the sake of simplicity, the RSA should not be split between areas.

Northern and Southern Flank

Discussion then shifted to potential closures. On Georges Bank, Council staff explained that the Northern Flank offered a clearer management boundary for a closure with a shared boundary with Closed Area II – North (HAPC). A closure of the Northern Flank would also exclude little exploitable biomass from open bottom fishing, making it a more practical candidate for protecting small scallops. By contrast, the Southern Flank hotspot was dominated by a single survey station with high densities of multiple year classes, and very high densities (~98 scallops/m²) of 2-year old recruits. PDT members questioned whether such a small area was worth closing.

New York Bight

In the Mid-Atlantic, Council staff noted that the tasking from the Committee was broad, covering the Elephant Trunk (ET), Hudson Canyon (HCS), New York Bight (NYB), and Long Island (LI), but that the PDT had previously agreed to move forward with the New York Bight-Closure polygon as the starting

point for analysis since it fit the extent of the high densities of 35-75mm scallops and was already defined in the SAMS model. Staff explained that this closure would exclude exploitable biomass in HCS that could otherwise support open-bottom fishing.

AGENDA ITEM #2: OFL AND ABC RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Dvora Hart presented the preliminary OFL and ABC estimates for Georges Bank, the Mid-Atlantic, and the Gulf of Maine (including NGOM). She explained that the SAMS model was initialized with 2025 survey data and projected forward into 2026 and 2027, with fishing mortality rates applied according to the current ABC control rule. Two control rules were presented for discussion based on the recommendations provided during the August 19th SSC meeting.

- 1) OFL and ABC using Scallop ABC Control Rule
 - a. $F_{OFL}=0.49$ and $F_{ABC}=0.36$
- 2) OFL and ABC using Georges Bank reference points
 - a. $F_{OFL}=0.36$ and $F_{ABC}=0.29$

The PDT discussed the implications. One noted that last year's OFL was nearly 29,000 mt, compared to over 79,000 mt in earlier years, underscoring how much the stock has declined. Dr. Hart added that the 2024 projection had forecast around 100,000 tons of biomass, but the realized value was about 30,000 tons lower due to unexpectedly high natural mortality, especially on Georges Bank. She highlighted that the assumed natural mortality in the Mid-Atlantic had increased from 0.25 to 0.4, raising concerns about whether such elevated mortality would continue. The PDT was reminded that while the absolute numbers are lower than in past years, the fishery is managed spatially and neither control rule scenario is likely to be constraining. GARFO staff added that deviating from the current ABC control rule would require a formal framework change. Several PDT members agreed that, given limited time and competing priorities, it may be best to carry the standard values forward in FW40 and revisit alternative control rules in FW41.

Council staff introduced the draft memo being prepared for the SSC ahead of its October 8 meeting. The memo will include the preliminary OFL and ABC estimates for 2026 and 2027 and document the PDT's responses to the SSC's earlier guidance.

A PDT member commented on the 2024 SSC recommendation to transition the assessment model to a state-space approach, explaining that while they agreed with the recommendation in principle, no length-based state-space framework currently exists that could simply be adapted for scallops. Existing models, such as WHAM, are age-based and not directly transferable. They added that a next-generation stock assessment model with random effects might eventually make this feasible. There was general interest in moving toward this type of modeling in the future, but it is not practical in the near term. Council staff also noted the SSC's recommendations to expand the use of risk tables to better capture ecosystem-level risks, such as bycatch and climate-driven changes, and to incorporate more comprehensive socioeconomic data into assessments. These recommendations were generally supported, though the PDT agreed their integration would need to proceed gradually given time and resource constraints. Council staff confirmed that this perspective would be reflected in the PDT's response to the SSC, highlighting that while the PDT supports the SSC's recommendations, their incorporation will need to align with available capacity and workload.

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 3:15PM