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

September 10, 2026
Boston, MA, webinar

The Scallop Committee met on September 10, 2026 in Boston, MA and via webinar at 9:00 AM to 1) receive the Advisory Panel (AP) report from their September 9th meeting; 2) review preliminary survey results from 2026 scallop surveys; 3) specifications action for fishing years (FY) 2027 and 2028 (default); 4) Framework 42 discussion of management measures; 5) draft three-year work plan; and 6) other business.

***MEETING ATTENDANCE:*** Committee: Melanie Griffin (Chair), Eric Hansen (Vice Chair), Togue Brawn, Doug Christel (GARFO), Ted Platz, Melissa Smith, and Jake Wiscott (MAFMC). NEFMC staff: Connor Buckley, Jenny Couture, Alex Dunn, Cate O'Keefe (Council Executive Director), Jonathon Peros, and Dr. Naresh Pradhan; PDT members: Sharon Benjamin, Bil DuPaul, Carl Huntsberger, Emily Keiley, Sally Roman, and Kelly Whitmore; Scallop Advisory Panel: Jim Gutowski (AP Chair). Council members in attendance included Council Chair Dan Salerno, Jackie Odell, and Megan Ware; new Council member Kirby Aarsheim. Approximately 23 members of the public attended.

***KEY OUTCOMES***

- **Specifications Action for FY 2027 and FY 2028 (default)**
  - Recommended PDT analysis of a SAMS model run with:
    - One trip to a combined Nantucket Lightship North and South area with harvest of a trip ranging from 9,000 to 15,000 pounds with a delayed opening of June 1, 2027; Nantucket Lightship Extension area (69.10 W boundary) would remain closed;
    - Model run with 20-40 DAS; and
    - No access area trips for FY 2027
  - Recommend PDT analysis of a NGOM set-aside for FY 2027 using a fishing mortality rate of between 0.15 and 0.25 to all available biomass in NGOM.
- **Framework 42 management measures**
  - Table the following motion until the September Council meeting: recommend that the Council discontinue development of regional management of Limited Access DAS, while continuing development of NGOM sub-management areas.

**Scallop work priorities**

- Approved the three-year Scallop work plan (2027-2029)
- Table the following motion until the September Council meeting: recommend that the Council include the following as part of the 2027 work plan – the ability to limit DAS fishing time in closed areas as a time limiting access area management tool as expeditiously as possible.

***INTRODUCTIONS***

The Committee Chair reviewed the agenda. Council staff reviewed the 2026 Council Scallop FMP priorities, timeline for ongoing work, and an overview of scallop fishery performance. New Council member Kirby Aarsheim was introduced, and GARFO staff Emily Keiley provided an update on Scallop Research Set-Aside rewards, namely that awards and funding are beginning to be issued to award recipients.

***AGENDA ITEM #1: SCALLOP ADVISORY PANEL (AP) REPORT***

The Scallop AP Chair provided an overview of the AP meeting held on September 9th to help inform the Committee's discussion. Additional information on the AP meeting can be found in the September 9th meeting summary.

The Scallop Committee did not have any questions.

***AGENDA ITEM #2: 2026 SCALLOP SURVEYS AND AGENDA ITEM #3: FISHING YEAR (FY) 2027 AND 2028 (DEFAULT) SPECIFICATIONS***

Council staff began by presenting an overview of the 2026 scallop survey results, preliminary biomass estimates, and other fishery data. Overall, key survey findings are summarized as follows:

Surveys continued to detect the strong 4-year-old year-class in the Nantucket Lightship South (NLS-S) region that was first detected in 2023. The mean survey abundance estimate from this region was approximately 3.3 billion animals. While this year class continues to represent more than 50% of the scallop biomass on Georges Bank (>40mm), they continue to grow more slowly than scallops elsewhere on Georges Bank. A large recruitment event was detected this year in the eastern portion of Closed Area II, which was closed to scallop fishing beginning in FY 2026. Small areas of recruitment were detected also around the northern Mid-Atlantic (Block Island, Long Island), in the northern portion of the Great South Channel, Area I, the Nantucket Lightship North, and in the Southern Flank. While no incoming year classes were observed throughout the rest of the Mid-Atlantic, the current 4-year old cohort continue to survive and grow, although the region saw heavy fishing effort after the survey season. Overall, surveys suggest a slight increase in biomass on Georges Bank driven by growth of the Nantucket Lightship cohort, and in the Mid-Atlantic, with one large year class on the cusp of entering the fishery. Fishing opportunities in the Stellwagen Bank region of the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area (NGOM) are expected to be similar or slightly lower in FY 2027 compared to FY 2026.

Staff sought feedback on the range of potential specification alternatives for FY 2027 and FY 2028. The action will set ABC/ACLs, days-at-sea, access area allocations, total allowable landings for the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) management area, targets for General Category incidental catch, General Category access area trips and trip accounting, and set-asides

for the observer and research programs for fishing year 2027 and default specifications for fishing year 2028.

**Discussion**

One Committee member asked for information on the meat count for the Nantucket Lightship (NLS)-South area. This is based on the biomass projections for next year which would include expected growth; this information will be available in the next couple of weeks. Staff noted that the eastern portion of the area contains slower growing scallops, which is part of the impetus for keeping that portion closed to fishing to allow for additional time for growth.

**Public Comment:**

- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** requested the Committee evaluate how specifications and decisions were determined last year relative to realized landings and effort given FY 2026 is only halfway through, but landings are already approaching the annual projected landings (APL). The new research track assessment in 2025 changed the shell height meat weight equations and also adjusted the natural mortality parameter, so there is precedence to make tweaks to avoid underestimating landings. This underestimation should be considered as part of this year's discussion on DAS allocation for FY 2027. Staff explained that the biomass estimates from the SAMS model were relatively accurate for FY 2026; the underestimation in landings is most likely driven by the landings per unit effort (LPUE) assumption, which is challenging to calculate due to several factors that change over time.

1. **MOTION (HANSEN/PLATZ)**
   Task the PDT with analysis of a SAMS run with:

1 trip to a combined Nantucket Lightship North and South area with harvest of a trip ranging from 9,000 to 15,000 pounds. The Nantucket Lightship Extension area (using 69.10 W boundary) would remain closed. Delayed opening June 1, 2027.

**Rationale:** This motion is based on AP Motion #2. Changing the delayed opening to June 1st would allow access when scallops have the best yield and would avoid safety concerns with hurricane season with a July 1st opening.

**Discussion on the motion:**

Several Committee members were in favor of a broad range of harvest levels.

**Public Comment:**

- **Tyler Miranda (New Bedford, MA Limited Access Scallop Vessel fishermen)** commented that the fishing year has been great this year with minimal high-grading, with more effort on the west end and less fishing in Georges Bank area, and that it's important to let fishermen fish without overcomplicating management with closed areas. Fishermen won't fish small scallops because of the poorer yield.
- **David Frulla (Fisheries Survival Fund)** appreciated the Scallop AP discussion on September 9th regarding access area fishing and historical time limits on trips in Georges

Bank areas which reduced the potential for high-grading. He asked why limiting trip time in access areas could not be done now given the prior implementation. Access areas grow scallops and the price per pound reflects this, thereby increasing the potential for high-grading. Fisheries Survival Fund recently discussed this issue and is interested in limiting time in access areas; if this issue isn't resolved then there was a suggestion to close access areas to enable additional scallop growth. The GARFO Committee member explained that time limits on trips in access areas was feasible historically when there were NOAA resources available to help process data and implement the program, though resources are now limited.

- **Ron Smolowitz (Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF))** explained that Scallop Amendment 10 includes an evaluation for closing areas to fishing and when to reopen the areas in order to protect small scallops. There should be a discussion on the loss of scallops due to natural mortality from sea star predation. Closed Area I was closed a few years ago due to potential recruitment in the area, but this never materialized due to starfish predation; there was a similar situation with Closed Area II. Closing areas to protect small scallops does not make sense because of predation. Stock assessments need to evaluate this more in-depth.

**MOTION #1 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT**

2. **MOTION (HANSEN/PLATZ)**
   Recommend that the Committee task the PDT with analysis of a SAMS runs: 20-40 DAS.

**Rationale:** Without FY 2027 projections available, the broader range would account for uncertainty in data available now. This would include the PDT recommendation of 24 DAS.

**Discussion on the motion:** None.

**MOTION #2 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT**

3. **MOTION (BRAWN/PLATZ)**

   Task the PDT with analysis of a SAMS run with no access area trips for FY 2027.

**Rationale**: Maintaining the closure of the NLS-S would lead to increasing returns in scallop growth, and a broad range of options should include no access area trips, which was well supported by the Scallop AP.

**Discussion on the motion:** None.

**MOTION #3 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT**

4. **MOTION (M. SMITH/BRAWN)**

   Task the PDT with analysis of a NGOM set-aside for Fishing Year 2027 using F=0.15 to F=0.25 applied to all available biomass in the Northern Gulf of Maine.

**Rationale:** Same as Scallop AP consensus statement #2; consistent with other management, broader range, and helps evaluate individual components of management areas for exploitable biomass.**Discussion on the motion:** None.

**MOTION #4 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT**

### *AGENDA ITEM #4: FRAMEWORK 42*

Council staff reviewed the Framework 42 Discussion Document and sought input regarding the development of measures for regional DAS management and NGOM sub-management areas. Staff advised that the Committee may wish to make tasking motions for additional analysis or provide further direction on the scope of this action.

**Discussion:**

The new Council member asked how regional DAS would be allocated to the limited access fleet and if this would be based on homeport location and how the total number of DAS would be determined by region. Staff explained that all limited access holders would receive the same regional DAS allocation and that the regional DAS would be determined based on exploitable biomass projections.

Overall, there was mixed opinion on whether to continue developing regional DAS as a potential future management tool. One member thought the measure should be discontinued if there isn't strong interest in using this tool in the future, commenting that there isn't a need to over-manage the resource given repopulation has already been documented to occur when fishing rates were high. Another member thought regional DAS could be helpful in the future should scallops be assessed as two separate stocks. As a result, this could align fishing effort with management by applying different fishing rates. GARFO commented that the agency needs lead time to develop the necessary changes in vessel monitoring system (VMS) codes. Another Committee reiterated that neither the regional DAS nor the NGOM sub-management areas would be in place for FY 2027, though both could be used as future tools to help spread out fishing effort and encourage scallop fishing in other areas. One person suggested allowing differential trading (versus equivalent 1:1 trading) to allow the market to determine the number of DAS per region. The Scallop PDT spoke about the option for differential trading in July and thought this could result in stacking DAS allocation on a single vessel, which is not the intention of this management measure. Regarding NGOM sub-management areas, one member suggested this as a tool to spread out fishing effort versus concentrating effort on Stellwagen Bank.

**Public Comment:**

- **David Frulla (Fisheries Survival Fund)** was interested in developing management measures to limit time in access areas to reduce incidental fishing mortality, thus, loss in revenue. He reiterated the Fund's interest in helping address this issue.
- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** commented that the Fund's members have mixed views on regional DAS: let fishermen determine where to fish vs developing a tool that could be used in the future. He commented that previously, most effort was in Georges Bank relative to the Mid-Atlantic, though this has switched in FY 2026. Ultimately, he was concerned with forcing people to fish in certain areas based on their

DAS allocated to a certain region. He asked GARFO whether DAS trip trading or limiting time in access areas was more resource intensive. The GARFO Committee member thought DAS trip trading was simpler to implement.

- **Ron Smolowitz (Fisheries Survival Fund)** did not understand the purpose of regional DAS; instead he suggested limiting time in access areas as part of FW42**.**
- **Mary Beth Tooley (O'Hara Corporation)** spoke in favor of the regional DAS measure previously, though she preferred limiting time in access areas if management measures had to be prioritized.
- **Tyler Miranda (New Bedford, MA Limited Access Scallop Vessel fishermen)** did not prefer regional DAS and suggested focusing on addressing high-grading and incidental fishing mortality through 100% retention and to let fishermen go fish.

**5. MOTION (PLATZ/M. SMITH)**

Move that the Committee recommend that the Council discontinue development of measures in Framework 42 to support regional management of Limited Access Days-at-Sea, while continuing development of Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas.

**Discussion on the motion:**

The Committee recognized the differing opinions within the Committee, the AP, and the broader industry. One Committee member asked about the feasibility for discontinuing work on this measure now but potentially reopening consideration and discussion on including this measure in November, when FW42 will be discussed next. The Council's Executive Director advised against this as GARFO needs lead time to develop the mechanism and processes to support changes in management. Another Committee member noted that there are limited resources so best to stop work if there is no interest.

The Council Chair opposed the motion given the impetus for spreading out fishing effort was similar across regional DAS and NGOM sub-management areas. One Committee member disagreed and thought that NGOM sub-management area development was unique in that there is already a 200 lb DAS limit and a total cap on fishing effort in the area and fishermen shift effort based on changes in resources.

**5A. MOTION TO TABLE (BRAWN/M. SMITH)**

Move that the Committee recommend that the Council discontinue development of measures in Framework 42 to support regional management of Limited Access Days-at-Sea, while continuing development of Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas.

**Rationale:** Differing opinions around the Committee that would benefit from additional time and consultation with NOAA partners.

**Discussion on the motion:** None.

**MOTION #5A CARRIED 6-0-0**

### *AGENDA ITEM #5: SCALLOP WORK PRIORITIES*

Council staff provided a presentation on progress toward completing the 2026 work priorities. The Scallop PDT developed a draft three-year work plan, incorporating input provided during the June AP and Committee meetings. The work plan is intended to serve as an implementation tool for the Scallop Advisory Panel and Committee to sequence work priorities over 2027 – 2029. While the work plan would not constrain the Committee's ability to make annual priority recommendations that are not included in the work plan, recommendations from outside of the work plan should consider how the work would further the objectives of the Scallop Strategic Plan and be weighed against work already specified in the work plan.

**Discussion:**

One meeting participant referenced the July national scallop day and asked staff about the process to address the federal priorities, specifically scallop access on the Northern Edge. Staff advised that Committee discussion on this topic would be premature and will be discussed during the September Council meeting under Executive Order agenda item. The Council Chair briefly described the recent Executive Committee meeting, explaining that the Northern Edge action topic would occur under final priorities discussion in December; he noted that the Executive Committee recommended permit stacking as a Secretarial Action. The priorities discussion in December will be focused on setting work items for 2027, not 2028 and 2029.

Another Committee member appreciated the Scallop Strategic Plan and the ability to adjust the work plan as emerging issues arise and liked the idea to improve fishing practices.

**CONSENSUS STATEMENT #1**

Approve the 3-Year Scallop Work Plan (2027-2029).

**Discussion on the consensus statement:** None.

6. **MOTION (PLATZ/HANSEN)**
   The Committee moves to include the following as part of the 2027 work plan: the ability to limit DAS fishing time in closed areas as a time limiting access area management tool as expeditiously as possible.

**Rationale:** Limiting time in access areas is an important tool to address high-grading and loss of resource in closed areas, need as soon as possible with industry input.

**Discussion on the motion:**

The GARFO Committee member asked the makers of the motion for additional rationale on the intention of the motion and more detail on what problem and objectives the motion is intending to address so that adequate management and implementation measures could be developed. One person was opposed to the motion as they did not want to substitute this for improving fishing practices overall; additional thought should be taken before moving forward with this idea. One

member supported the motion as he thought this should be an easy lift and is a higher priority than the high-grading work item.

**Public Comment:**

- **Ron Smolowitz (CFF)** commented that limiting swept area in an access area has ramifications once fishing related mortality is accounted for. If NOAA cannot enforce closed areas using only VMS, then this should be addressed first and foremost. This could be done by requiring electronic monitoring. He emphasized this is a NOAA task, not a Council work priority.

### 6A. MOTION TO TABLE (BRAWN/PLATZ)

The Committee moves to include the following as part of the 2027 work plan: the ability to limit DAS fishing time in closed areas as a time limiting access area management tool as expeditiously as possible.

**Rationale:** Limiting time in access areas is an important tool to address high-grading and loss of resource in closed areas, need as soon as possible with industry input.

**Discussion on the motion:**

The Committee discussed the ability for NOAA to enforce open and closed areas. The GARFO Committee member explained that closed areas are enforced based on transiting requirements; NOAA is limited on the number of changes that can be made to the VMS program every year, so it is important for the Council to prioritize changes. A couple of Committee members wanted additional information and analysis on this motion before moving forward. GARFO is planning to discuss this further internally; the Council's Executive Director noted that the Council will not have a full priorities discussion during the upcoming September Council meeting, so this additional work does not have to be completed immediately.

**Public Comment:**

- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund)** asked if this could be discussed during an upcoming Enforcement Committee meeting in order to have a more informed discussion in December when the Council will more thoroughly discuss priorities for 2027.

**MOTION #6A CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT**

### *AGENDA ITEM #6: OTHER BUSINESS*

Council staff presented an overview of upcoming meetings and decision points regarding the specifications setting and Framework 42 actions. An important meeting to note is the upcoming Council meeting in Plymouth, MA and via webinar, specifically the Scallop Committee report on September 16th.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.