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New England Fishery Management Council

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

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Advisory Panel

Hybrid; Providence, RI

June 2, 2026

The Scallop Advisory Panel (AP) met in Providence, RI and via webinar on June 2, 2026 at 9:00 AM to 1) Develop recommendations for Scallop Research Set-Aside priorities for 2027/2028 and 2028/2029; 2) Receive an update on the timeline of Framework 42 and provide input on the development of expected measures; 3) Develop recommendations for sequencing Scallop Strategic Plan work items for 2027-2029; 4) Discuss other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

James Gutowski (Chair), Cassie Larsen (Vice-Chair), Kirby Aarsheim, Brady Lybarger, Wes Brighton, Michael Marchetti, Jay Elsner, Ben Martens, Brent Fulcher, Chris Merl, Kyle Grant, Ed Mullis, Peter Hughes, Alex Todd, Walter White; Council Staff: Connor Buckley, Chandler Nelson, Dr. Naresh Pradhan, Jennifer Couture; Committee: Melanie Griffin, Melissa Smith, Michelle Duval, Togue Brawn

Approximately 20 members of the public were also in attendance.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- **On NGOM sub-management areas**, the AP passed a motion recommending that the NGOM remain a single management area and supported setting an annual fishing mortality rate of $F=0.25$. The AP also passed a motion recommending additional analysis of an in-shell possession limit in the NGOM.
- **On regional Days-at-Sea (DAS) allocations**, the AP saw mixed opinions on regional DAS allocations. Motions both supporting and opposing further development of this management measure failed. The AP opposed differential DAS counting and supported maintaining the current 10-day DAS carryover provision.
- **On Strategic Plan Implementation**, the AP made a consensus statement identifying in-season adjustment triggers, improved real-time data collection, managing fishing in high-density areas, and developing a technical definition of high grading as near-term priorities. The AP also supported continued work on fishing practices and electronic monitoring.
- **On RSA Priorities**, the AP made a consensus statement recommending no changes to the RSA priorities for 2027-2028.

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES:

Council staff opened the meeting with brief updates. Staff reported on the International Pectinid Workshop, which was held in New Bedford and brought together scallop experts from around the world to share information on scallop biology, ecology, and management. Staff also highlighted the successful Scallop Research Share Day held on May 12, 2026, which featured ten presentations and drew approximately 60 participants both in person and online. Presentations covered a range of topics, including scallop biology, gear research, surveys, industry-collected data, and co-management efforts. Staff also summarized discussions from the recently reconstituted Enforcement Committee, noting that a portion of the meeting focused on enforcement trends and challenges in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) scallop fishery.

Discussion: An AP member asked whether the Enforcement Committee discussed the effectiveness of the increased vessel monitoring system (VMS) ping rate requirement and whether it had improved enforcement. Council staff explained that the issue was discussed but was not a major focus of the meeting, which concentrated primarily on NGOM enforcement issues. They were informed that enforcement agencies continue to use VMS data primarily as a secondary source of evidence and that staff have not received clear feedback indicating whether the increased ping rate has improved enforcement outcomes.

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #2: FY2026 FISHERY PERFORMANCE

Council staff reviewed preliminary fishery performance information for FY2026 and provided a brief update on the conclusion of FY2025. Staff reported that FY2025 ended with approximately 18 million pounds landed and that an unexpected storm event moved scallops from the Western Gulf of Maine closure into adjacent open fishing areas, resulting in approximately one million additional pounds of landings. Staff reported that catch rates and Landings Per Unit Effort (LPUE) have remained strong into FY2026, particularly in portions of the Mid-Atlantic. While catch rates have been higher than expected, staff indicated that exceeding the fishery Annual Catch Limit (ACL) currently appears unlikely as fishing effort expands into additional areas of the resource.

Staff also summarized preliminary survey observations. Survey groups reported continued growth and high densities in Nantucket Lightship South, strong biomass and yields in portions of the Mid-Atlantic, declining biomass on Stellwagen Bank, and healthy biomass on Jeffreys Ledge. Survey observations also identified seed scallops in portions of Area II and low levels of shell blister and nematodes in the Mid-Atlantic. Survey groups observed relatively few cut shells despite substantial fishing activity in portions of the Mid-Atlantic fishery.

For the NGOM, the fishery opened on April 1 and closed on April 13 after the projected harvest of the 437,867-pound set-aside. A record 207 vessels participated in the fishery, completing 2,325 trips. Approximately 35% of landings were made by LAGC IFQ vessels and that more than one-third of landings were delivered to ports other than Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was explained that a quota overage of less than 3% would trigger a pound-for-pound accountability measure in 2027 and that catch rates on Stellwagen Bank slowed during the season as vessels expanded effort onto Jeffreys Ledge.

Discussion: One AP member expressed concern that discussions of 2025 performance focused on final landings without acknowledging that a substantial portion of those landings resulted from the unexpected storm event. They also questioned whether scallops located in difficult-to-survey portions of the Gulf of Maine could contribute additional biomass in future years. Carl Huntsberger (Maine DMR) responded by saying that some areas remain challenging to survey due to bottom conditions and issues with high-density gear and are not currently incorporated into biomass estimates.

Several AP members discussed recent fishing conditions in the NGOM fishery. One AP member expressed concern about how quickly fishing conditions on Stellwagen Bank appeared to decline and suggested that increased participation may have contributed to fishing pressure in the area. Other AP members observed that fishing activity expanded into other portions of the NGOM management area as the season progressed and discussed observations of sea stars and changing catch rates throughout the fishery. They also discussed the importance of continuing to evaluate management approaches for the NGOM fishery as participation and fishing patterns evolve.

Enforcement and safety concerns in the NGOM fishery were also addressed. Several AP members observed limited at-sea enforcement presence during the season while also observing that dockside enforcement appeared more prevalent. The AP also discussed the NGOM two-trip-per-day provision. Several AP members opposed eliminating the provision, expressing concern that doing so could advantage larger vessels and place smaller vessels at a competitive disadvantage.

On recent Days-at-Sea (DAS) utilization and fishing behavior in the limited access fishery, AP members suggested that weather conditions, carryover DAS, crew limitations, and the transition away from access-area fishing opportunities may all be influencing effort patterns. Several AP members suggested that fishing effort is now spread across longer open-bottom trips than in previous years, affecting how DAS are utilized throughout the fleet.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz (Fisheries Survival Fund):** Asked what accountability measures would be triggered if the scallop fishery exceeded its ACL. He noted that historical projections have occasionally underestimated available scallops and suggested that scallops located in difficult-to-survey areas may create challenges for quota-based management.
- **Togue Brawn (Downeast Dayboat):** Expressed concern about the limited at-sea enforcement presence in the NGOM fishery and asked whether AP members had similar experiences. She also asked about suggestions to eliminate the two-trip-per-day provision as a possible response to enforcement concerns.
- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund):** Asked about recent DAS utilization and whether the fishery may be front-loading landings during fishing year 2026. Council staff responded that about 25% of DAS have been used so far this year which is higher than at this point in some previous years.

AGENDA ITEM #3: 2026 SCALLOP WORK PRIORITIES

Council staff provided an overview of 2026 Scallop work priorities. Staff included that the recent Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was released later than anticipated, delaying research award decisions. The AP was asked to provide input on several work priority topics, including Council-contracted work to develop a new scallop stock projection method, as well as Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas and region-specific DAS allocations

Developing new stock projection methods

Council staff reviewed a recently awarded contract to SMAST to develop new stock projection methods for use in setting annual scallop fishery specifications. Staff explained that the project will include a review of the existing SAMS model and relevant literature, development and testing of alternative projection approaches, and creation of a new LPUE model to improve DAS calculations. Staff indicated that the goal is to have a viable new stock projection model available for use in setting fishing year 2028

specifications, while continuing to compare the performance of new approaches against existing SAMS model outputs, survey information, and fishery data.

Discussion: One AP member asked when the AP would have an opportunity to review the LPUE modeling work. Council staff responded that the work would likely be presented once a more complete product is available. They remarked that it would not be used for setting specifications before fishing year 2028. Another AP member asked how the project would interact with the SAMS model. There is no intention to immediately replace the current SAMS model and that both approaches would likely be evaluated side-by-side during a transition period.

Several AP members discussed opportunities to improve survey methodologies and data collection. One AP member suggested that the project could be an opportunity to evaluate innovative survey approaches and improve survey coverage. Other AP members discussed the possible uses of Artificial Intelligence in HabCam data analysis, however this topic falls outside of the scope of this SMAST contract.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Commented that HabCam systems deployed from survey vessels are capable of collecting high-quality imagery at relatively high towing speeds and added that AUVs continue to provide new survey capabilities. He emphasized that advances in AI could substantially improve the speed and efficiency of image and video analysis and suggested that these tools have applications beyond stock assessment.
- **Bill DuPaul (College of William & Mary):** Expressed concern that scallop surveys are conducted during periods of heavy fishing activity, making it difficult to accurately project future biomass and fishery performance. He suggested that fishing activity occurring during survey periods may affect the reliability of stock projections. Other AP members agreed with this observation.
- **John Quinn:** Asked whether there were any jurisdictional issues between the Council and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center regarding the development and use of new projection models and whether there was agreement on pursuing this approach for fishing year 2028. Council staff responded that NEFSC staff would continue to participate directly in the process. It was added that one objective of the effort is to provide additional analytical capacity during periods of reduced federal support.

Scallop Framework 42

Council staff announced that the Council will be initiating Scallop Framework 42 at the June meeting in Mystic, CT. This framework will address FY2027 and 2028 (default) catch specifications and consider regional allocation of Limited Access Days-at-Sea and sub-management areas in the NGOM.

Northern Gulf of Maine Sub-management areas

Council staff reviewed ongoing work to develop NGOM sub-management areas as part of Framework 42. The concept was initially developed during Framework 40 discussions as a potential tool to reduce fishing pressure on Stellwagen Bank and encourage effort on other banks and ledges that contain substantial scallop biomass but generally support lower catch rates. The current NGOM Total Allowable Landings (TAL) is based on total exploitable biomass across the management area and a single fishing mortality target, while realized fishing mortality on Stellwagen may be considerably higher than elsewhere in the NGOM. Potential benefits of sub-management areas discussed by the Plan Development Team (PDT) included reducing vessel crowding on Stellwagen, distributing fishing effort more broadly, and extending the duration of the fishing season. Staff clarified that the PDT had generally favored a system with no more than two sub-management areas and sequential access between areas. Staff added that monitoring

and enforcement would be challenging but that NOAA indicated the concept could be supported operationally.

Discussion: An AP member questioned why sequential access would be necessary. Council staff explained that enforcement considerations and the desire to distribute effort spatially were major reasons for the PDT's recommendation, but that concurrent access to sub-areas could be supported. However, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) has confirmed that, although simultaneous access would still be an enforcement challenge, it is more possible now than it was when the conversation on multiple management areas began last year. The same AP member recommended evaluating how recent fishing seasons would have unfolded under various sub-management area scenarios to better understand potential fleet responses.

Several AP members raised concerns about the proposed structure. One AP member questioned the need for a transit corridor and suggested that opening both areas simultaneously would provide additional flexibility and naturally distribute fishing effort. Council staff clarified that the proposed transit corridor would only be in effect when an area was closed and would not reduce available fishing grounds. Another AP member questioned how managers would respond if survey estimates proved inaccurate and a sub-area did not reach its allocation as expected. They also suggested that the transit corridor may not be necessary as northern ports become more viable for more vessels. Also voiced were equity concerns, with arguments that further sub-dividing the NGOM would disproportionately affect the Limited Access vessels and would further create an exclusive fishing zone in federal waters.

Several on the AP questioned whether sub-management areas addressed the underlying issues driving fishing behavior in the NGOM. They noted that fishing practices, such as high grading and deck loading, were a larger problem for the sustainability of the NGOM fishery that would not be addressed by dividing the NGOM into sub-areas. Others questioned whether the scale of the NGOM fishery justified the amount of management attention devoted to the issue.

AP members expressed differing views on the need for additional management measures. Some argued that the fishery could largely govern itself through fleet behavior and supported maintaining a simple management approach. Others expressed concern about concentrated fishing effort on Stellwagen Bank and supported exploring tools that could provide more responsive in-season management.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Suggested that much of the NGOM resource may be inaccessible and therefore unlikely to experience excessive fishing mortality. He argued that if this could be demonstrated scientifically, the fishery could be managed with a simpler approach that relies less on annual biomass estimates and allocation decisions.
- **John Quinn:** Echoed concerns that management measures should remain simple and proportional to the scale of the fishery. He added that NGOM landings represent a very small portion of total scallop landings and cautioned against creating unnecessarily complex management systems.
- **Damian Parkington (LAGC IFQ scallop fishermen, Provincetown, MA):** Questioned whether sequential sub-management areas would meaningfully change fishing behavior or fishing mortality. He opined that vessels would continue to concentrate on Stellwagen Bank once it became available and argued that splitting the area may not achieve the intended objectives. He also remarked that many landings south of 42°20' come from vessels operating under IFQ permits and suggested that providing alternative fishing opportunities earlier in the season may be more effective than limiting participation. Mr. Parkington also suggested that many vessels would continue fishing in areas closer to their home ports regardless of management boundaries. He expressed support for considering lower possession limits and smaller dredge gear in the NGOM fishery.

- **Todd Bragdon (Scallop vessel owner, Stonington, CT):** Suggested that management efforts should focus on addressing derby-style fishing behavior rather than dividing the management area into separate zones. He proposed identifying participants before the season and developing approaches that would spread fishing effort over a longer period.

1. MOTION (FULCHER/BRIGHTON)

Recommend that the NGOM be left as status quo, with no split sub-management areas.
The fishing mortality rate of $F=0.25$ should be set for the entire area, annually.

Rationale: Separate sub-areas may not achieve the stated objective of reducing vessel crowding and limiting fishing mortality on Stellwagen Bank.

Discussion on the motion: One AP member supported consideration of an in-shell possession limit, noting that it could help simplify the fishery and provide a more equitable approach while protecting smaller scallops. Another AP member remarked that a fishing mortality rate of 0.25 would already be considered through Framework 42 and that the primary new element introduced by the motion was the in-shell possession limit. There was also caution against eliminating consideration of sub-management areas before additional analyses are completed, noting that some fishermen in the NGOM continue to support the concept.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #1 CARRIED 10-4

2. MOTION (FULCHER/GRANT)

Recommend that Scallop Committee task the Scallop PDT with further analysis of an appropriate in-shell possession limit.

Rationale: Current in-shell possession limits in the Northern Gulf of Maine allow for 1,666 lb seaward of the demarcation line, which has led to concerns of moving shell stock outside of the NGOM management area or into state waters, as well as facilitating large deck loads that lead to increased discard mortality.

Discussion on the motion: Supporters of this motion saw it as an opportunity to maximize the resource for fishermen while staying mindful of the sustainability of the resource.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #2 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT

Regional Day-At-Sea Allocations

Council staff reviewed potential approaches for allocating DAS separately between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank regions as a future management tool. The concept originated from the Long-term Strategic Plan and is intended to reduce the risk of regional overfishing when large differences in LPUE result in disproportionate fishing effort in one region. Since 2021, much of the fleet's effort has been concentrated on Georges Bank, and the 2025 stock assessment concluded that overfishing occurred on Georges Bank in 2023. The Scallop PDT recognized potential benefits of regional management but cautioned that additional management complexity could create challenges for administration, monitoring, enforcement, and fleet flexibility. GARFO staff have shared that there is capacity to support regional DAS allocations in FY 2027, but trading of DAS between regions and vessels could not be supported until FY 2028.

Two concepts were proposed to address this:

1. Vessels are allocated Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank DAS, delineated by the 71W boundary line.
2. Differential counting, a measure used before for Northeast Multispecies areas, would enable specifying a ratio to adjust DAS charges to increase or decrease realized effort in a region. Differential DAS counting areas would be delineated by the 71W boundary line.

Regarding carryover, Council Staff requested feedback on how to address it for the period between FY2026 and FY2027. Three concepts were proposed for discussion:

1. Not allow any DAS carryover
2. Reduce DAS carryover from 10 DAS to 5 DAS
3. Split up DAS carryover between regions by the same proportion as FY 2027 DAS allocation.

Discussion: The AP discussed concerns about the complexity of regional DAS allocation and differential DAS counting. Several AP members stated that differential DAS counting would be difficult for captains to understand and could increase the risk of mistakes. Some AP members suggested that if regional DAS allocations are considered, the approach should be simple, such as allocating a set number of days east and west of the 71°W boundary.

Several AP members were concerned that regional allocations could reduce flexibility and force vessels into areas where fishing conditions are poor. AP members pointed out that fishing decisions are influenced by factors beyond LPUE, including price, meat quality, nematodes, water temperature, and timing of the fishing year. Some cautioned that survey information used to support regional allocations may be outdated by the time specifications are set, particularly when substantial fishing occurs after surveys are completed.

Several AP members questioned whether regional DAS allocations would effectively address the underlying issues facing the fishery. One AP member argued that high-grading and the need for more responsive in-season management tools were larger concerns than regional DAS allocation.

The AP also discussed DAS carryover. Some AP members supported reducing carryover, noting that 10 carryover DAS represents a large portion of the current DAS allocation and creates uncertainty for the following fishing year. Other AP members supported maintaining the current carryover provisions, noting that carryover DAS provides operational flexibility and allows vessels to respond to weather, market conditions, and changing fishing opportunities.

While opinions differed on the overall concept, some AP members supported continued analysis of a simple regional allocation system. Another AP member suggested that additional analysis and industry input would be useful before determining whether regional allocations are an appropriate management tool. Several AP members stressed that the Council should focus on evaluating alternatives and understanding fleet responses before making decisions.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Supported continued consideration of a regional split but expressed concern about the adequacy of current projection models to support it. He suggested that regional DAS allocations may be better considered after improvements to stock projection methods are completed.
- **John Quinn:** Urged caution and opined that regional allocations, differential DAS counting, and DAS carryover are separate issues that should be considered independently.

- **Eric Hansen (Scallop Vessel Owner, New Bedford):** Remarked that portions of Closed Area II that were previously considered overfished contained substantial numbers of juvenile scallops during the SMAST drop camera survey trips. He cautioned that resource conditions can recover more quickly than expected and encouraged the AP to consider that uncertainty when evaluating regional management measures.
- **Paul Weckesser (Scallop Vessel Owner, New Bedford):** Opposed dividing the fishery into separate regions, arguing that restricting where fishing can occur could produce unintended consequences similar to previous area-based management approaches. He expressed concern that regional allocations could contribute to high-grading and noted that the fishery has only recently received additional open-bottom opportunities in the Mid-Atlantic and Area I. He also supported maintaining the current ten-day DAS carryover provision.
- **Todd Bragdon:** Opposed management measures that would reduce flexibility for fishermen, including regional allocations or reductions in DAS carryover.
- **Magnar Kvilhaug (Scallop Vessel Owner):** Opposed regional allocations, arguing that defining where vessels can fish may concentrate effort rather than distribute it. He also opposed reducing DAS carryover.

3. **MOTION (MERL/AARSHEIM)**

Recommend that regional-DAS allocations are not developed further for Scallop Framework 42, and that DAS allocations remain general across the open-bottom, as well as no changes to DAS carryover.

Rationale: Regional-DAS allocations decrease flexibility for the fleet, and would further concentrate effort in smaller regions.

Discussion on the motion: The motion received limited discussion before a substitute motion was offered.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #3 FAILED 5-9

3. MOTION TO SUBSTITUTE (FULCHER/MULLIS)

Recommend that regional-DAS allocations be developed for implementation in FY 2028, when the Regional Office can support implementation of DAS trading. The Scallop AP does not support further development of differential counting of DAS. DAS carryover would remain status quo.

Rationale: There are benefits of regional-DAS allocations in reducing vessel concentration in a single region, but trading of DAS would be necessary to provide sufficient flexibility for vessel operations.

Discussion on the motion: One AP member generally opposed management measures that direct where fishermen can fish but supported continued development of regional DAS allocations because of concerns about the current condition of the resource. Another AP member expressed concern that uncertainty in biomass estimates could limit fishing opportunities and stated that he could not support the motion because of concerns about fairness and equity.

Public Comment: None

MOTION TO SUBSTITUTE FAILED 5-8-1

AGENDA ITEM #4: SCALLOP STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the discussion on developing a three-year roadmap of scallop work priorities, the AP received a presentation from Dr. Andrew Corso of the Coonamessett Farm Foundation on ongoing work to develop electronic monitoring (EM) systems for the scallop fishery. The presentation reviewed the status of the project, system components, vessel monitoring technologies, and opportunities to collect additional information through electronic monitoring platforms.

Discussion: The AP discussed implementation considerations and potential applications of electronic monitoring. Discussion focused on equipment requirements, opportunities to collect environmental data, and the potential integration of electronic monitoring across fisheries. Dr. Corso explained that current work includes collection of temperature and depth information and mentioned that additional environmental sensors may become feasible as technology continues to improve.

Several AP members were supportive of electronic monitoring and discussed its potential role in addressing issues such as high grading and deck loading. There were discussions on how fishermen could be encouraged to participate in future EM programs and suggestions that incentives may be needed if vessels continue to have access to traditional observer coverage. Questions were also raised regarding how EM systems would operate on vessels participating in multiple fisheries and how monitoring requirements could be integrated across fisheries.

The AP also discussed concerns regarding the use of EM data. One AP member cautioned that successful implementation would require clearly defining the objectives of the program and mentioned that challenges can arise when fishery-specific monitoring programs are incorporated into broader federal compliance programs. Dr. Corso agreed that the appropriate application of electronic monitoring is likely to differ among fisheries. He included that one objective of the project is to identify what approaches work well and where challenges remain.

Implementing the Scallop Strategic Plan

Council staff reviewed the development of the Scallop Strategic Plan and the process for creating a three-year roadmap of scallop work priorities. Staff explained that the Strategic Plan was informed by visioning sessions and input from Council members, NOAA Fisheries, Council staff, and industry participants. The plan includes 9 objectives and 29 strategies intended to guide future Council work.

Discussion: Several AP members identified in-season management tools as the highest priority. Some AP members stated that improved in-season management could help address high-density fishing areas, high grading, fishing practices, and resource distribution. Several AP members suggested that increased availability of real-time vessel communications and data transmission technologies could support development of these tools. Council staff commented that in-season management measures and tools for addressing high-density fishing areas are among the concepts most ready for Council consideration, while other approaches involving real-time data collection would require additional planning and development by the PDT.

One AP member added that many of the Strategic Plan objectives overlap with ongoing research priorities and suggested that RSA projects could help inform future management actions. Several AP members called for a clear definition of high grading before developing management measures to address it. Additional discussion focused on identifying productive fishing areas and whether the Northern Edge should be included among future work priorities.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Recommended a more focused approach to implementing the Strategic Plan by concentrating on issues associated with the Nantucket Lightship South resource that may be ready for rotational access in FY2027. He suggested that work on predation, high grading, fishing practices, and reducing tow times could begin immediately and argued that electronic monitoring may provide a practical tool for addressing some of these issues. He added that successful approaches developed for one area of the fishery could later be expanded more broadly.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #1

The Scallop AP recommends including the following near-term priorities in the 2027-2029 work for implementing the Long Term Strategic Plan:

- In-season adjustment triggers and improving real time data collection to inform them.
- Managing in high-density areas for accessibility and sustainability
- Developing a technical definition of high grading

Longer term, the AP supports the continued development of measures to improve fishing practices, and/or electronic monitoring to address high grading.

Scallop Research Set-Aside Priorities for 2027 & 2028

Council staff reviewed the proposed Research Set-Aside (RSA) priorities for 2027 and 2028 and requested feedback on the relative priority levels assigned to various research categories.

Discussion: The AP generally supported maintaining survey work as the highest research priority. Several AP members also supported elevating fishing gear research, while noting that too many high-priority categories could reduce the usefulness of the prioritization process. There were differing views on the appropriate priority for biology, resource enhancement, offshore wind, protected species, and habitat characterization research. The AP also discussed the need for clearer definitions of high-, medium-, and low-priority categories to improve future prioritization exercises. Ultimately, the AP decided to maintain Status Quo for the ranking of RSA priorities.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Questioned whether reducing the priority of sea turtle research could create issues given his understanding that research on sea turtles is required under the Biological Opinion governing the scallop fishery.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #2

The Scallop AP recommends no changes to the Scallop RSA priorities for 2027-2028, relative to the Scallop RSA priorities for 2025-2026.

AGENDA ITEM #4: OTHER BUSINESS:

Lobster Gear Conflict

An AP member informed the AP of gear conflicts between the scallop and offshore lobster fisheries, noting reports of large concentrations of lobster gear in Closed Area II that have limited access to portions of the scallop resource.

Voluntary Permit Buyback Program

An AP member shared an idea for a voluntary permit buyback program for the scallop fishery. It was suggested that a buyback program could reduce excess harvesting capacity, reduce fishing pressure, and provide an option for fishermen interested in leaving the fishery. The AP discussed potential challenges associated with developing such a program, including identifying funding sources, and evaluating potential conservation benefits. Several AP members expressed general support for exploring the concept further but remarked that substantial additional discussion and analysis would be required before considering any future action.

The meeting adjourned at 5:37PM



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DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Committee

Hybrid; Providence, RI

June 3, 2026

The Scallop Committee(Committee) met via in Providence, RI and via webinar on June 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM to 1) Develop recommendations for Scallop Research Set-Aside priorities for 2027/2028 and 2028/2029; 2) Receive an update on the timeline of Framework 42 and provide input on the development of expected measures; 3) Develop recommendations for sequencing Scallop Strategic Plan work items for 2027-2029; 4) Discuss other business, as necessary.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Melanie Griffin (Chair), Eric Hansen (Vice-Chair), Togue Brawn, Michelle Duval, Jake Wiscott, Matt Gates, Emily Keiley, Ted Platz, John Pappalardo, Melissa Smith, Renee Zobel; **Council Staff:** Connor Buckley, Chandler Nelson, Jennifer Couture; **Advisory Panel:** Jim Gutowski, Jay Elsner, Peter Hughes.

Approximately 17 members of the public were also in attendance

KEY OUTCOMES:

- **NGOM Sub-Management Areas**, the Committee passed two motions recommending that the PDT develop alternatives for NGOM sub-management areas, including a north/south partition with options for either concurrent or sequential access, and evaluate alternatives for possession limits that include combinations of in-shell and shucked scallops.
- **Regional DAS Allocations**, the Committee passed a consensus statement supporting continued development and analysis of region-specific DAS allocations as a potential future management tool. The Committee did not support reducing the current 10-day DAS carryover provision.
- **On Strategic Plan Implementation**, the Committee identified in-season management tools, improving the reliability of stock projections, fishing practices, and fleet capacity issues as important areas for future work under the Scallop Strategic Plan.
- **On RSA Priorities**, the Committee recommended updated RSA priorities for 2027 and 2028, including revisions to survey priorities, inclusion of high-grading research under bycatch, and moving sea turtle and offshore wind research to general priority categories.

AGENDA ITEM #1: WELCOME AND UPDATES:

Council staff opened the meeting with brief updates. Staff reported on the International Pectinid Workshop, which was held in New Bedford and brought together scallop experts from around the world to share information on scallop biology, ecology, and management. Staff also highlighted the successful Scallop Research Share Day held on May 12, 2026, which featured ten presentations and drew approximately 60 participants both in person and online. Presentations covered a range of topics, including scallop biology, gear research, surveys, industry-collected data, and co-management efforts. Staff also summarized discussions from the recently reconstituted Enforcement Committee, noting that a portion of the meeting focused on enforcement trends and challenges in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) scallop fishery.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #2: FY2026 FISHERY PERFORMANCE

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Staff also summarized preliminary survey observations. Survey groups reported continued growth and high densities in Nantucket Lightship South, strong biomass and yields in portions of the Mid-Atlantic, declining biomass on Stellwagen Bank, and healthy biomass on Jeffreys Ledge. Survey observations also identified seed scallops in portions of Area II and low levels of shell blister and nematodes in the Mid-Atlantic. Survey groups observed relatively few cut shells despite substantial fishing activity in portions of the Mid-Atlantic fishery.

For the NGOM, the fishery opened on April 1 and closed on April 13 after the projected harvest of the 437,867-pound set-aside. A record 207 vessels participated in the fishery, completing 2,325 trips. Approximately 35% of landings were made by LAGC IFQ vessels and that more than one-third of landings were delivered to ports other than Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was explained that a quota overage of less than 3% would trigger a pound-for-pound accountability measure in 2027 and that catch rates on Stellwagen Bank slowed during the season as vessels expanded effort onto Jeffreys Ledge.

Discussion: A Committee member who participated in the SMAST drop camera survey provided a correction to the survey update presented by Council staff. They reported that large numbers of sea stars were observed throughout the southern flank and hotspot areas surveyed on Georges Bank, while relatively few sea stars were observed in Closed Area II where concentrations of seed were identified.

One Committee member requested information on the number and distribution of permit types participating in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) fishery. Council staff responded that approximately half of 2026 NGOM landings were made by vessels holding NGOM permits, about one-third were landed by LAGC IFQ vessels, and roughly 10% were landed by vessels holding both NGOM and Limited Access permits.

Another Committee member asked about the depth range covered by the Mid-Atlantic survey. Council staff explained that the survey samples across the established depth strata but additional details on the deepest survey tows could be provided at a later date.

Public Comment: None

AGENDA ITEM #3: 2026 SCALLOP WORK PRIORITIES

Council staff provided an overview of 2026 Scallop work priorities. Staff included that the recent Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was released later than anticipated, delaying research award decisions. The AP was asked to provide input on several work priority topics, including Council-contracted work to develop a new scallop stock projection method, as well as Northern Gulf of Maine sub-management areas and region-specific DAS allocations.

Developing new stock projection methods

Council staff reviewed a recently awarded contract to SMAST to develop new stock projection methods for use in setting annual scallop fishery specifications. Staff explained that the project will include a review of the existing SAMS model and relevant literature, development and testing of alternative projection approaches, and creation of a new LPUE model to improve DAS calculations. Staff indicated that the goal is to have a viable new stock projection model available for use in setting fishing year 2028 specifications, while continuing to compare the performance of new approaches against existing SAMS model outputs, survey information, and fishery data.

Discussion: None

Public Comment:

- **Peter Hughes (Atlantic Capes Fisheries):** Asked how delays in the Research Set-Aside (RSA) award process could affect survey data collection and stock projections if project awards were issued later than anticipated. Council staff responded that survey data would still be available by mid-August and that RSA award decisions would be made well before then. It was added that several survey projects receive multi-year funding and therefore would not be expected to experience interruptions in data collection.
- **Ron Smolowitz (Fisheries Survival Fund):** Commented that surveys are conducted while fishing activity is occurring and suggested that projections will remain uncertain without more continuous monitoring of the resource. Council staff agreed that survey timing introduces uncertainty and explained that one objective of the new projection model is to provide additional analytical capacity and flexibility should disruptions occur in the future.
- **John Quinn (Fisheries Survival Fund):** Asked about the involvement of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in the development of new projection methods. Council staff responded that Science Center staff are actively involved in the process and are expected to remain closely engaged in the development and application of any new projection model.

Scallop Framework 42

Council staff announced that the Council will be initiating Scallop Framework 42 at the June meeting in Mystic, CT. This framework will address FY2027 and 2028 (default) catch specifications and consider regional allocation of Limited Access Days-at-Sea and sub-management areas in the NGOM.

Discussion: There was a clarifying question on how the proposed transit corridor would function under a NGOM sub-management area approach. Council staff explained that the transit corridor would allow vessels to travel between management areas when one area is closed, enabling vessels from ports such as Provincetown to access northern fishing grounds without having to travel around the closed area.

Public Comment:

- **Ron Smolowitz:** Asked how scallops in the NGOM were assessed and incorporated into management prior to Amendment 10. He questioned whether optical survey methods adequately reflect the portion of the resource that is accessible to the commercial fishery and suggested that survey estimates may not fully represent commercially harvestable biomass. A Committee member responded that Maine DMR began conducting Gulf of Maine scallop surveys in 2005 and noted that, prior to that time, there were no federal surveys there contributing to biomass estimates

Northern Gulf of Maine Sub-management areas

Council staff reviewed ongoing work to develop NGOM sub-management areas as part of Framework 42. The concept was initially developed during Framework 40 discussions as a potential tool to reduce fishing pressure on Stellwagen Bank and encourage effort on other banks and ledges that contain substantial scallop biomass but generally support lower catch rates. The current NGOM Total Allowable Landings (TAL) is based on total exploitable biomass across the management area and a single fishing mortality target, while realized fishing mortality on Stellwagen may be considerably higher than elsewhere in the NGOM. Potential benefits of sub-management areas discussed by the Plan Development Team (PDT) included reducing vessel crowding on Stellwagen, distributing fishing effort more broadly, and extending the duration of the fishing season. Staff clarified that the PDT had generally favored a system with no more than two sub-management areas and sequential access between areas. Staff added that monitoring and enforcement would be challenging but that NOAA indicated the concept could be supported operationally.

Discussion: None

Public Comment: None

1. MOTION (SMITH/BRAWN)

Move to task the PDT to develop an alternative for sub-management areas in Northern Gulf of Maine that utilizes a north/south partition at the Cape Ann longitude of 41°15'N (referencing Figure 1 of Document 3a) with sub-options for this alternative that include harvesting the areas either 1) consecutively or 2) concurrently.

Rationale: When specifications are determined for NGOM, typically using exploitable biomass estimates of several survey areas combined, harvest effort is concentrated on Stellwagen Bank, resulting in the removal of legal biomass that exceeds what was determined as the maximum poundage at $F=0.25$. (For example, FY2026, Stellwagen contributed 209K pounds of exploitable biomass, however, the specifications were set at 437K, but the majority of those pounds were removed from

Stellwagen, exceeding the $F=0.25$.) Preliminary calculations indicate that harvest on Stellwagen reached an F-rate of 0.38.

Discussion on the motion: A Committee member asked whether concurrent access to multiple sub-management areas would differ substantially from the current fishery. A NOAA Fisheries representative explained that separate vessel monitoring system (VMS) codes could be developed to support monitoring of multiple management areas. However, if areas were open concurrently and vessels were allowed to transit through closed areas, enforcement and monitoring would become more complex. They indicated that the concept could be implemented but would require additional monitoring and enforcement effort. The Committee member expressed support for continued evaluation of both sequential and concurrent access approaches to determine which would best achieve the objective of distributing fishing effort.

Another Committee member asked how managers would determine when a second area would open under a sequential access approach. Council staff acknowledged that this is an important implementation question and explained that discussions to date have generally assumed the second area would open after the harvest limit in the first area is reached, though alternative approaches such as fixed opening dates could also be considered.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #1 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT WITH ONE ABSTENTION

2. MOTION (SMITH/BRAWN)

Move to task the PDT to evaluate alternatives to address modifications in possession limits, including but not limited to combinations of in-shell and shucked meats.

Rationale: Limiting the possession limit of total scallops on vessel could deter high-grading and potentially reduce incidental mortality of un-kept scallops.

Discussion on the motion: The maker of the motion added that this could deter vessels moving scallops from one management area to another or from state to federal waters.

Public Comment: None

MOTION #2 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT WITH ONE ABSTENTION

Regional Day-At-Sea Allocations

Council staff reviewed potential approaches for allocating DAS separately between the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank regions as a future management tool. The concept originated from the Long-term Strategic Plan and is intended to reduce the risk of regional overfishing when large differences in LPUE result in disproportionate fishing effort in one region. Since 2021, much of the fleet's effort has been concentrated on Georges Bank, and the 2025 stock assessment concluded that overfishing occurred on Georges Bank in 2023. The Scallop PDT recognized potential benefits of regional management but cautioned that additional management complexity could create challenges for administration, monitoring, enforcement, and fleet flexibility. GARFO staff have shared that there is capacity to support regional DAS allocations in FY 2027, but trading of DAS between regions and vessels could not be supported until FY 2028.

Two concepts were proposed to address this:

3. Vessels are allocated Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank DAS, delineated by the 71W boundary line.
4. Differential counting, a measure used before for Northeast Multispecies areas, would enable specifying a ratio to adjust DAS charges to increase or decrease realized effort in a region. Differential DAS counting areas would be delineated by the 71W boundary line.

Regarding carryover, Council Staff requested feedback on how to address it for the period between FY2026 and FY2027. Three concepts were proposed for discussion:

4. Not allow any DAS carryover
5. Reduce DAS carryover from 10 DAS to 5 DAS
6. Split up DAS carryover between regions by the same proportion as FY 2027 DAS allocation.

Discussion: The Committee Chair noted that the Advisory Panel generally did not support differential DAS counting because it was viewed as overly complex. One Committee member asked how in-season management measures would be implemented and whether they would require additional Council action. It was explained that the Council is exploring mechanisms that would establish predefined triggers and responses to allow more timely management action. Council staff added that any such system would require development of specific criteria, triggers, and management responses through a framework action and may require regulatory changes if more rapid implementation is desired.

One Committee member questioned how regional DAS allocations could be used to address concerns about localized overfishing and asked whether fishing effort could be controlled through area-specific triggers. Council staff explained that regional DAS allocations would not necessarily require area closures and noted that previous discussions of in-season management have focused on tools such as access area closures, recruitment indicators, and LPUE-based triggers.

Several Committee members supported continued analysis of regional DAS allocations but expressed reservations about allocating region-specific DAS through Framework 42. Some Committee members suggested that additional work should occur before any implementation decision, particularly with respect to DAS trading. Council staff added a clarification that, if the Council ultimately wishes to have regional DAS allocations available as a management tool in fishing year 2028, it may be beneficial to begin developing the necessary regulatory framework in advance. Several Committee members supported continued analysis by the PDT of the concept while delaying implementation until the necessary administrative and trading mechanisms are available. Several Committee members also expressed support for maintaining the current 10-day DAS carryover provision.

Public Comment:

- **Brady Lybarger (LAGC IFQ Scallop Fisherman, Cape May, NJ):** Supported continued development of regional DAS allocations and encouraged the Committee to continue refining the concept over time so that it is available if future fishery conditions warrant its use.
- **John Quinn:** Urged caution and noted that regional DAS allocations, differential DAS counting, and DAS carryover are separate issues that should be considered independently.
- **Drew Minkiewicz (Sustainable Scalloping Fund):** Supported continued development of regional DAS allocations as a management tool, commenting that it may be beneficial to have the option available even if it is not immediately needed.
- **Magnar Kvilhaug (LA Vessel Owner, New Bedford, MA):** Supported maintaining the current DAS carryover provision. He argued that vessels carrying over DAS is often a result of operational realities and economic conditions rather than poor management decisions, and stated that a five-day carryover would not provide meaningful flexibility for many Limited Access vessels.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #1

The Scallop Committee supports the continued development of measures to allocate region-specific DAS, and tasks the Scallop PDT with additional analysis. The Scallop Committee does not support reducing the 10 DAS carryover provision.

Discussion: Regional Office staff provided that, if the Council wishes to have region-specific DAS allocations available as a management tool by fishing year 2028, regulatory development would need to begin before implementation is desired. They explained that the intent would be to establish the necessary administrative and regulatory mechanisms, such as VMS coding and DAS exchange capabilities, so that the tool would be available if needed in the future. The Committee Chair confirmed that this approach would require advance Council action to provide sufficient lead time for implementation.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Asked whether the measure could be developed and included in regulations without being immediately implemented.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Asked whether georeferenced catch data are available to support analysis of region-specific DAS allocations. Council staff responded that geolocated catch data are available and can be used to support future analyses. Staff also clarified that developing the regulatory framework for the measure is separate from deciding whether and how to allocate DAS among regions.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #1 CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION

AGENDA ITEM #4: SCALLOP STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Council staff reviewed the development of the Scallop Strategic Plan and the process for creating a three-year roadmap of scallop work priorities. Staff explained that the Strategic Plan was informed by visioning sessions and input from Council members, NOAA Fisheries, Council staff, and industry participants. The plan includes 9 objectives and 29 strategies intended to guide future Council work.

Discussion:

Objective 1: Management Capacity and Responsiveness - The Committee discussed the development of in-season management tools and the role that real-time industry data could play in supporting management decisions. One Committee member suggested that dispersing fishing effort in high-density fishing areas should be a priority and recommended developing measurable triggers and associated management responses that could be applied when fishing effort becomes concentrated. Other Committee members discussed how real-time industry data could be incorporated into future in-season management tools and suggested that the PDT evaluate how existing data streams could be used to support management decisions. Council staff commented that a more coordinated effort to compile and evaluate available real-time data could help improve understanding of fishery conditions and support future management actions.

Objective 2: Improving the Reliability of Projections - Several Committee members suggested that the existing data sources be inventoried and evaluated for whether the available information meets the standards necessary to support management actions. Committee members also discussed the importance of establishing minimum data standards and ensuring that future data collection efforts are aligned with management needs.

One Committee member suggested incorporating environmental variables into stock assessment and projection work. Council staff explained that the PDT is exploring the use of NOAA ocean forecast products and bottom temperature information to provide additional context for stock projections. Committee members also discussed uncertainty associated with survey timing and suggested that the PDT evaluate the impacts of survey timing on stock projections through future analytical work. It was also suggested that this topic could be considered through future RSA priorities.

Another Committee member suggested that implementation of the Northern Gulf of Maine control date should remain a priority.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Emphasized the importance of information verification and suggested that management actions should be supported by reliable and well-vetted data. He also expressed support for establishing a working group focused on scallop enhancement.

Objective 3: Expanding Opportunities in NGOM- There was no Committee discussion on this Objective.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Commented that continued access for Limited Access vessels in the NGOM was an important consideration during development of Amendment 21 and suggested that future management discussions should consider how that access can be maintained.
- **John Quinn:** Noted that substantial work has already been completed on the Northern Edge issue and suggested that previous analyses could be updated and revisited rather than restarted.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Suggested that the Council pursue an experimental fishery through an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to collect information needed to evaluate future access opportunities in the Northern Edge area. He argued that an experimental fishery could provide information on habitat impacts, interactions with other fisheries, and resource conditions while generating economic

value and informing future management decisions. He also suggested that the PDT could help define the terms of such a program.

Objective 4: Improving Rotational Management - There was no Committee discussion on this Objective.

Objective 5: Improving Fishing Practices - One Committee member suggested that the PDT review lessons learned from previous access area management and begin developing proactive strategies for managing fishing activity in Nantucket Lightship South. Another Committee member emphasized the importance of defining high grading and identifying how any future measures could be enforced. Committee members also discussed the role of education and outreach in improving fishing practices and suggested that industry workshops could help fishermen better understand management objectives and best practices.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Commented that concerns regarding high grading remain widespread within the industry and suggested that expanded use of electronic monitoring could help address those concerns.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Opined that incidental mortality, rather than high grading itself, is the primary management concern. He suggested that future work focus on reducing mortality through measures such as limiting time spent in high-density fishing areas and exploring management approaches that use actual fishing time as a control measure.

Objective 6: Maintaining the Economic Viability of the Scallop Fleet – It was suggested that examples from other fisheries could be used to inform future work. Also recommended was the development of a white paper examining potential approaches to addressing capacity concerns. Committee members also suggested that any future review should compare the potential advantages and disadvantages of permit buyback programs and permit stacking.

Public Comment:

- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Commented that excess capacity remains an unresolved issue in the scallop fishery and supported further discussion of potential solutions, including a voluntary permit buyback program.
- **John Quinn:** Suggested exploring whether USDA programs could provide funding opportunities to support future capacity reduction efforts.
- **Paul Weckesser (Scallop Vessel Owner, New Bedford):** Supported continued evaluation of a voluntary permit buyback program and stated that such a program could help address excess capacity while providing an option for participants seeking to leave the fishery.

Objective 7: Maintaining a Dynamic RSA Program - One Committee member suggested that the PDT evaluate the minimum level of RSA funding necessary to maintain long-term survey programs. They clarified that the intent of this suggestion was not to recommend reduced RSA allocations.

Objective 8: Resource Enhancement - The Committee Chair stated that additional research, technical work, and policy development are likely needed before management action is considered and suggested that the issue may be better suited for Council discussion in future years. The Committee also discussed information currently collected through survey programs and whether existing datasets may contain information on sea star abundance that could inform future enhancement discussions.

Objective 9: Improving Industry Engagement - Committee members highlighted the value of outreach events and informal discussions with fishermen and suggested that unstructured opportunities for engagement can encourage more productive conversations than formal meetings alone. One Committee

member also pointed to recent listening sessions conducted in another fishery and suggested that similar efforts could help facilitate candid discussions within the scallop fishery.

Public Comment:

- **Todd Bragdon (Scallop vessel owner, Stonington, CT):** Supported renewed outreach efforts prior to the fishing season and suggested informal dockside meetings to discuss upcoming regulations and fishery conditions.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Suggested development of a voluntary certification program that would provide education on fishing practices, management measures, and Council processes while creating incentives for participation.
- **Drew Minkiewicz:** Supported expanded education and outreach opportunities and suggested that incentive-based programs could encourage greater industry participation and engagement.
- **Brady Lybarger:** Supported the concept of a voluntary certification program and suggested it could help transfer knowledge and experience to the next generation of fishermen.

Scallop Research Set-Aside Priorities for 2027 & 2028

Council staff reviewed the proposed Research Set-Aside (RSA) priorities for 2027 and 2028 and requested feedback on the relative priority levels assigned to various research categories.

Discussion: One Committee member expressed concern about establishing priorities for 2028 in advance, noting that future research needs may change. Council staff explained that RSA priorities can be modified before future Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) are issued and that the Council retains the ability to revisit priorities if needed.

On surveys, One Committee member suggested incorporating elements of Strategies 2.3 and 2.4 from the Scallop Strategic Plan into the survey priority language. The Committee also discussed whether annual or multi-year RSA solicitations should be used in the future. Council staff indicated that annual solicitations remain the most likely approach. One Committee member discussed the potential use of survey information to identify areas with high concentrations of juvenile scallops and suggested that future research could explore how information on juvenile and adult scallop densities may inform management measures.

On bycatch, there was one suggestion to include phrasing on high grading.

On turtles, several Committee members questioned whether sea turtle research should remain a dedicated RSA priority, noting that sea turtle interactions are not unique to the scallop fishery and suggesting that responsibility for this work may be more appropriately addressed through broader NOAA Fisheries research efforts. Committee members supported moving sea turtle research to a general priority category.

On wind, there was support for the PDT's recommendation to move offshore wind research to a general priority category, noting that several ongoing projects and survey efforts are expected to provide additional information in the near future.

Public Comment:

- **Jay Elsner (New Bedford, MA):** Supported expanded seasonal survey work and suggested that surveys conducted throughout the fishing season could improve understanding of resource conditions and the effects of fishing activity over time.
- **Ron Smolowitz:** Asked whether moving sea turtle research to a lower priority category would create any conflicts with the Biological Opinion governing the fishery. GARFO staff clarified that

the Biological Opinion requires NOAA Fisheries to conduct the research and does not specifically require funding through the Scallop RSA Program.

- **Danielle Palmer (NOAA GARFO, Protected Resources):** Explained that the PDT supports moving sea turtle research to a general priority category and stated that failure to fund sea turtle research through RSA would not place the scallop fishery at risk of closure. She noted that responsibility for the research rests with NOAA Fisheries and that ongoing capacity limitations at the Science Center may affect future research efforts.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #2

The Committee recommends that the Council adopt the following Scallop Research Set-Aside priorities for 2027 and 2028.

High Priority

1. SCALLOP RESOURCE SURVEYS:

- Establish a small-scale survey of access areas each year to provide additional data on the resource prior to the start of the fishing year on April 1 (Strategy 2.3)
- Increase survey effort at the end of an access areas rotational cycle to reduce projection uncertainty (Strategy 2.4)
- Interest in surveying areas with high densities of juvenile scallops and how they propagate over time.

Medium Priority:

2. SCALLOP BIOLOGY:

3. COMMERCIAL FISHING GEAR:

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

4. BYCATCH:

- Research could include evaluating the impact of high-grading and fishing behavior on incidental mortality.

5. FISHING IN HIGH DENSITY AREAS:

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

6. SCALLOP RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT:

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

General Priorities:

7. HABITAT CHARACTERIZATION AND FISHERY IMPACT RESEARCH

- Adopt Scallop PDT recommendation

8. TURTLES:

9. WIND:

CONSENSUS STATEMENT CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION

AGENDA ITEM #4: OTHER BUSINESS:

LAGC IFQ Regulatory Changes

The Committee heard a request from Brady Lybarger (LAGC IFQ fishermen, Cape May, NJ) for the Council to consider regulatory changes affecting LAGC IFQ permit holders targeting summer flounder. They requested to retain a small amount of scallops caught as incidental catch without those landings being deducted from the vessel's IFQ allocation. The request argued that the change would reduce waste, help offset operating costs, and avoid the need to lease IFQ quota to cover small incidental scallop landings.

Mr. Lybarger also requested for the Council to consider changes affecting vessels that hold both a federal LAGC IFQ permit and a Massachusetts Coastal Access (CAT) Permit. The request argued that scallops harvested in Massachusetts state waters under a state permit should not be deducted from a vessel's federal IFQ allocation and stated that current requirements can impose substantial quota leasing costs on fishermen operating in state waters.

Discussion: A NOAA Fisheries representative explained that both issues stem from the way permit categories were originally structured. They commented that incidental scallop permits and the LAGC IFQ permit are separate permit categories and that any change allowing IFQ permit holders to land scallops outside of their allocation would represent a fundamental change to the permit system. The Committee Chair added that Massachusetts has permit restrictions intended to limit participation and prevent a large influx of fishing effort into state waters. It was further explained that the original qualification and allocation process for LAGC IFQ permits contemplated fishing activity in state waters and that exempting state-water landings from IFQ accounting would similarly represent a significant change to the structure of the program. It was indicated that either proposal would likely require a substantial Council action, potentially through an amendment, and would need to be considered through the Council's prioritization process.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT #3

The Scallop Committee recommends that the Council request that NOAA Fisheries communicate the priority change for protected species research to the NMFS Office of Protected Resources so that turtle research can be funded through that office going forward.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION

With no other business the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30PM