



## 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*

### **DRAFT MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** August XX, 2025  
**TO:** Groundfish PDT  
**FROM:** Scallop PDT  
**SUBJECT:** **Scallop Fishery Activity in Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder Stock Area**

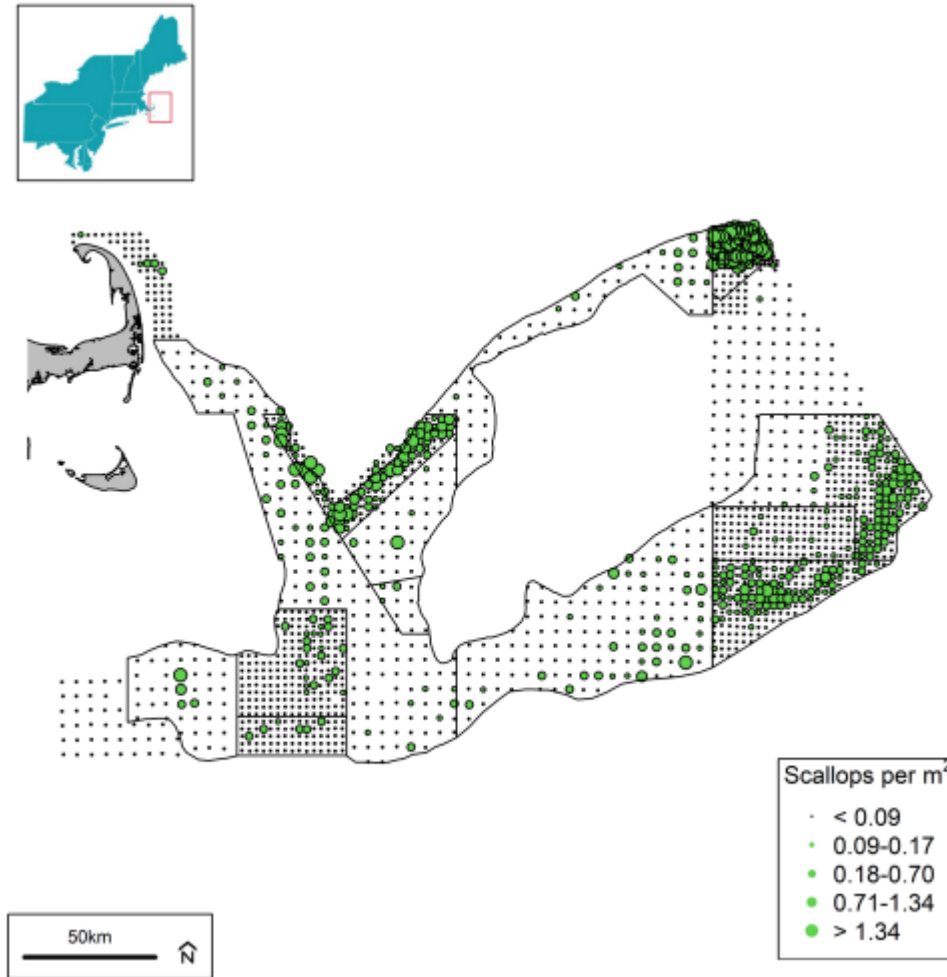
#### **Preface**

For several years, the Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) has provided information to the Groundfish PDT for consideration during the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)'s deliberations of the Georges Bank yellowtail flounder (GB yellowtail) Total Allowable Catch (TAC). These memos outline recent management measures within the GB yellowtail stock area, catch estimates of GB yellowtail, scallop fishing effort within the GB yellowtail stock area, and information on GB yellowtail catch advice (see Appendix I). The Scallop PDT revisited discussion on these topics through correspondence. This document communicates recent information on scallop fishing in the GB yellowtail stock area as well as the outlook for the scallop fishery and GB yellowtail bycatch on eastern Georges Bank in fishing year (FY) 2026.

#### **Scallop Fishery Outlook in Area II Access Area**

- For FY2025, full time limited access vessels were allocated two 12,000-pound trips: one to Area I Access Area (CL1) and one to Area II Access Area (CL2) for a total allocation of 24,000-pounds per vessel. The configuration of the CL2 in FY2025 includes the traditional access area (AII Southwest & AII Southeast) combined with the AII Extension.
- Without data from the 2025 field season, and with ongoing fishing in Area II, it is difficult to predict whether CL2 could continue to support access area fishing in FY2026. The PDT notes that CL2 became available for RSA compensation fishing on April 1, 2025. In FY2025, RSA compensation fishing in both the CL1 and CL2 was capped at half of the total available RSA Set-Aside, or 625,000 lb..
- The 2024 surveys of eastern Georges Bank observed a substantial amount of exploitable biomass in the eastern portion of CL2 (Figure 1) as well as in the open bottom directly west of CL2 in the Southern Flank (SF) Scallop Area Management Simulator (SAMS) area (Figure 1).
- Results of the 2024 surveys suggested that access area fishing in the CL2 was possible for FY2025, and one trip was allocated. There are three independent scallop surveys of CL2 and surrounding open areas (dredge, drop camera, and HabCam) occurring in 2025. Figure 1.

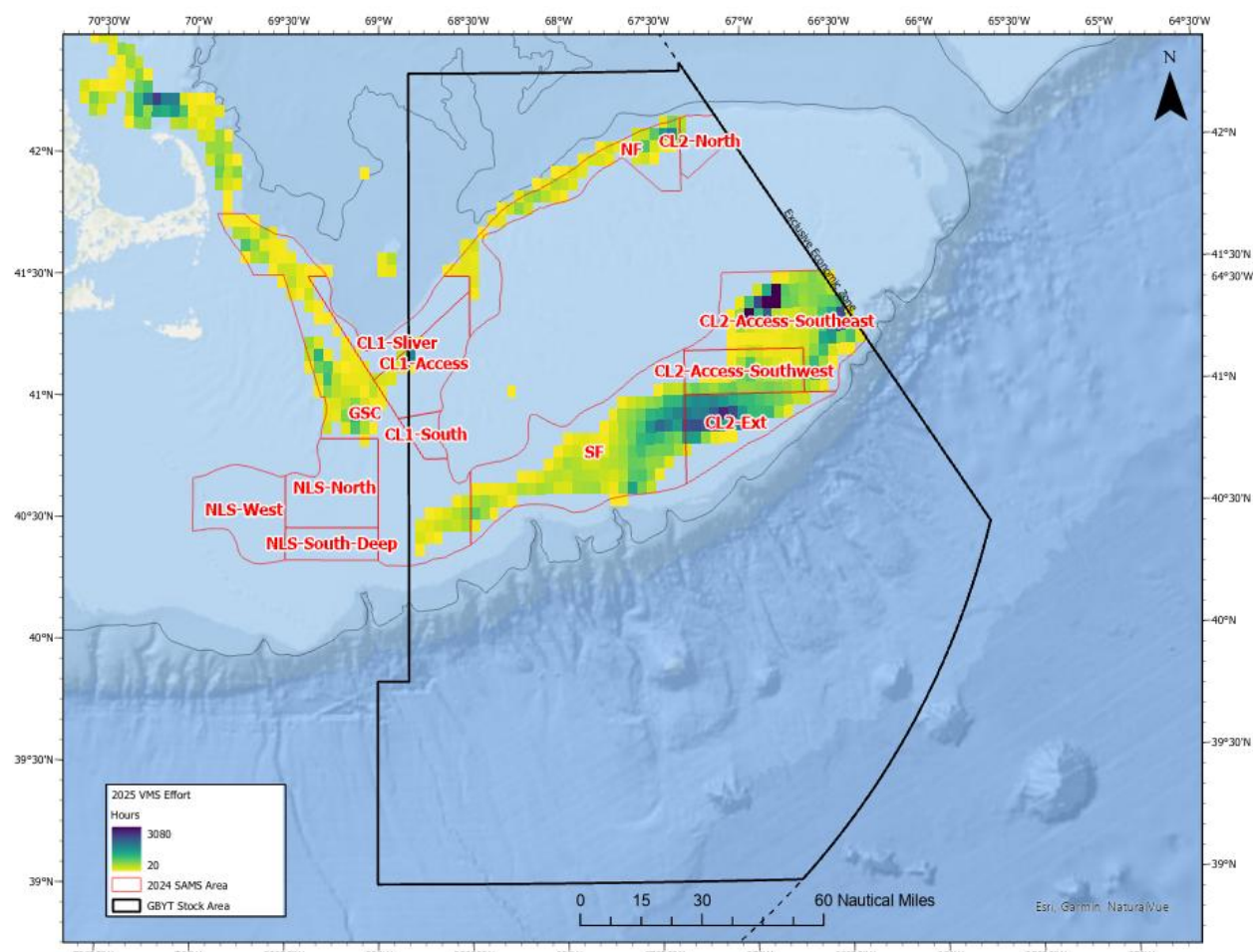
Mean recruited scallop density (scallop greater than 75 mm shell height per m<sup>2</sup>) at each station from the 2024 School for Marine Science and Technology Drop Camera Survey on Georges Bank.



### Recent Scallop Fishery VMS Effort

- Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data were used to estimate scallop fishery effort in FY2024 (Figure 2). The VMS data represent combined scallop fishery activity in terms of hours fished, aggregated at a resolution of 3 nautical mile squares with a minimum of 20 hours recorded per square. A speed filter of 2 to 5 kts was applied to remove vessel activity that was likely a result of transiting to and from fishing grounds.
- In FY2024, scallop effort in the GB yellowtail stock area occurred mostly in AII Southeast, AII Southwest, AII Extension and in the open area directly west within the Southern Flank (SF) (Figure 2). Some open area effort was directed along the northern flank of Georges Bank in FY2024, but to a lesser extent than what was observed in the SF.

Figure 2. Scallop fishery effort in terms of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) hours fished for FY2024 on Georges Bank, relative to the Georges Bank yellowtail flounder stock area and Scallop Area Management Simulator (SAMS) area boundaries.



## Scallop Fishery Bycatch of Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder

- The scallop fishery bycatch from FY2024 was estimated to be approximately 5mt, which is 33.3% of the FY2024 sub-ACL ([GARFO Quota Monitoring Scallop Bycatch Report](#)). The Scallop PDT projected GB yellowtail bycatch to be about 4.6-6.7 mt for FY2025, which is less than half of the scallop fishery sub-ACL of 14.9 mt (see [Framework 39](#)). However, as of August 2025, GB yellowtail bycatch has been estimated to be 16.3 mt. This is 109.4% over the scallop fishery sub-ACL and 243-354% over the projected bycatch amount. A full description of the caveats and anticipated bycatch of GB yellowtail for FY2025 and 2026 is contained in Section 6.3.3 of Framework 39.
- Due to an overage of the northern windowpane flounder sub-ACL in FY2023, the scallop fishery is subject to a reactive accountability measure (AM) for the duration of FY2025 (April 1, 2025 through March 31, 2026). The reactive AM requires use of a modified dredge (i.e., maximum 5-row apron with 1.5:1 hanging ratio) when fishing in CL2 for the entirety of FY2025. Use of the modified dredge is anticipated to reduce bycatch of both GB yellowtail and northern windowpane flounder, although this reduction may be less than originally suggested (LINK PDT MEMO ON SCALLOP FISHERY AMs FROM 2024). The AM triggers for Georges Bank yellowtail and Northern windowpane flounder were modified

through Northeast Multispecies Framework 69 so that the scallop fishery would only trigger the implementation of the modified gear if both the scallop fishery sub-ACL and the stock ACL were both exceeded, beginning in FY2025. In FY2024, scallop fishery bycatch for Northern windowpane flounder was estimated to be 43.1mt, which is 161.9% of the sub-ACL. However, bycatch for Georges Bank yellowtail was estimated to be approximately 5mt, which is 33.3% of the FY2024 sub-ACL. Since the overall stock ACL was not exceeded, the PDT does not anticipate that this AM will be in place again in FY2026.

- In season bycatch estimates are typically based on area-specific (i.e., in access areas and open areas) observed discard rates. For the 2025 bycatch projection, the PDT used data from observed trips between October 2023 and October 2024

*Table 1. Recent Georges Bank (GB) yellowtail Total Allowable Catch limits (TAC), scallop fishery sub-Annual Catch Limits (sub-ACL) and catches, by fishing year (FY). Values are shown in metric tons (mt).*

| <b>FY</b>                                                                                      | <b>Total Shared TAC</b> | <b>US % Share</b> | <b>US TAC</b> | <b>% US TAC Caught</b> | <b>Scallop sub-ACL</b> | <b>Scallop catch</b> | <b>% Scallop sub-ACL Caught</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| FY2010                                                                                         | 1,500                   | 64%               | 1,200         | 68%                    | 146                    | 17.6                 | 12%                             |
| FY2011                                                                                         | 2,650                   | 55%               | 1,458         | 76%                    | 200.8                  | 83.9                 | 42%                             |
| FY2012                                                                                         | 1,150                   | 49%               | 564           | 68%                    | 156.9                  | 164.0                | 105%                            |
| FY2013                                                                                         | 500                     | 43%               | 215           | 43%                    | 41.5                   | 37.5                 | 90%                             |
| FY2014*                                                                                        | 400                     | 82%               | 328           | 37%                    | 50.9                   | 59.0                 | 116%                            |
| FY2015*                                                                                        | 354                     | 70%               | 248           | 28%                    | 38                     | 29.7                 | 78%                             |
| FY2016*                                                                                        | 354                     | 76%               | 269           | 12%                    | 42                     | 2.1                  | 5%                              |
| FY2017*                                                                                        | 300                     | 69%               | 207           | 44%                    | 32                     | 52.6                 | 164%                            |
| FY2018*                                                                                        | 300                     | 71%               | 213           | 20%                    | 33                     | 12.7                 | 38%                             |
| FY2019*                                                                                        | 140                     | 76%               | 106           | 5%                     | 17                     | 1.7                  | 10%                             |
| FY2020*                                                                                        | 162                     | 74%               | 120           | 7%                     | 19                     | 1.5                  | 8%                              |
| FY2021*                                                                                        | 125                     | 64%               | 80            | 39.3%                  | 12                     | 29.1                 | 243%                            |
| FY2022*                                                                                        | 200                     | 61%               | 122           | 7.1%                   | 18                     | 7.8                  | 40.8%                           |
| FY2023*                                                                                        | 200                     | 53%               | 106           | 19.4%                  | 16.5                   | 19.5                 | 118.4%                          |
| FY2024*                                                                                        | 168                     | 42%               | 71            |                        | 14.9                   | 5                    | 33.3%                           |
| FY2025                                                                                         | 168                     | 42%               | 71            |                        | 14.9                   | 16.3*                | 109.1%*                         |
| Retention of GB yellowtail prohibited for scallop fishery. *FY2025 catch as of August 13, 2025 |                         |                   |               |                        |                        |                      |                                 |

## Appendix I: Recent Memos from Scallop PDT to Groundfish PDT re: GB yellowtail

Table 2. Links to past memos from the Scallop PDT to the Groundfish PDT regarding GB yellowtail.

| Date              | Link                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August 1, 2016    | See page 14: <a href="https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/B.2-160805-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-attachments_corrected-081716.pdf">https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/B.2-160805-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-attachments_corrected-081716.pdf</a>                    |
| August 2, 2017    | See page 7: <a href="https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/A6_170804-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-attached_170807_114738.pdf">https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/A6_170804-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-attached_170807_114738.pdf</a> |
| July 27, 2018     | See page 7: <a href="https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/A6_180809-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-attachment.pdf">https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/A6_180809-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-attachment.pdf</a>                         |
| August 13, 2019   | <a href="https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Doc.9-190813_Scallop-PDT-memo-to-Groundfish-PDT-re-GB-yellowtail.pdf">https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Doc.9-190813_Scallop-PDT-memo-to-Groundfish-PDT-re-GB-yellowtail.pdf</a>                                                                                   |
| August 12, 2020   | See page 11: <a href="https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/5a_200821-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo_200921_093835.pdf">https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/5a_200821-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo_200921_093835.pdf</a>                  |
| August 9, 2021    | <a href="https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Doc.3e-210809-Scallop-PDT-memo-to-Groundfish-PDT-re-GB-yellowtail.pdf">https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Doc.3e-210809-Scallop-PDT-memo-to-Groundfish-PDT-re-GB-yellowtail.pdf</a>                                                             |
| August 11, 2022   | <a href="https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/3E2_220816-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo_2022-09-08-143249_brbv.pdf">https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/3E2_220816-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo_2022-09-08-143249_brbv.pdf</a>     |
| September 1, 2023 | <a href="https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/4b_230901-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-OFLs-and-ABCs-2024-2025-with-Scallop-PDT-memo.pdf">https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/4b_230901-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-OFLs-and-ABCs-2024-2025-with-Scallop-PDT-memo.pdf</a>     |
| July 23, 2024     | <a href="https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/2.b.iii_240723-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-OFLs-and-ABCs-2025-2026-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-r.pdf">2.b.iii_240723-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-OFLs-and-ABCs-2025-2026-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-r.pdf</a>                             |