



New England Fishery Management Council

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

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

DRAFT MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 22, 2026
TO: Groundfish PDT
FROM: Scallop PDT
SUBJECT: **Scallop Fishery Activity in Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder Stock Area**

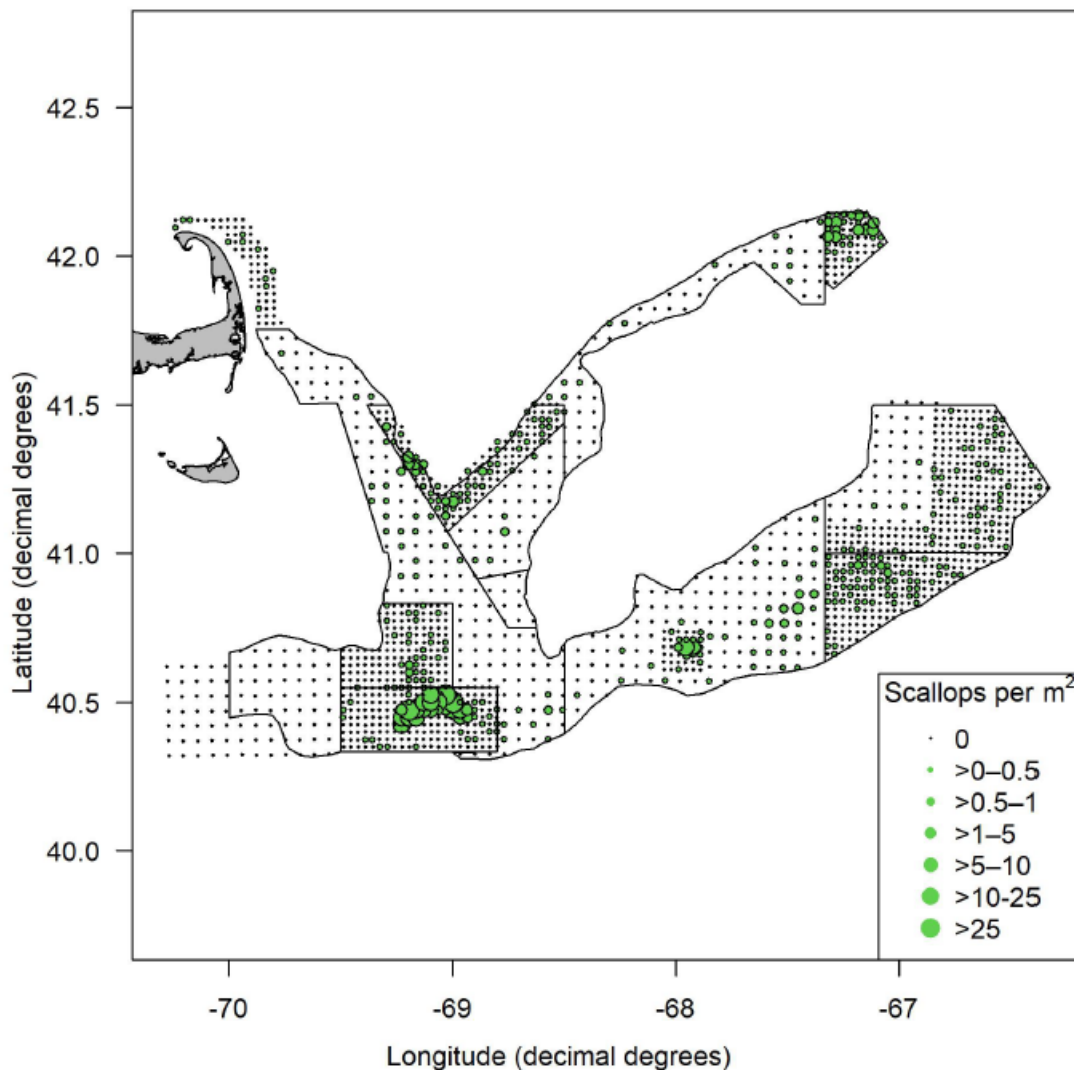
Preface

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) in October. These memos outline recent management measures within the GB yellowtail stock area, catch estimates of GB yellowtail, and scallop fishing effort within the GB yellowtail stock area. 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) 2027.

Scallop Fishery Outlook in the Georges Bank Yellowtail Flounder Stock Area

- Based on the results of the 2025 surveys, limited access vessels were not allocated additional access area trips in FY 2026. Area II was closed to scallop fishing on April 1 until May 15, when the area reopened to allow limited access vessels to finish harvesting their remaining FY 2025 allocation, and the area closed again on July 14, 2026. The configuration of Area II in FY 2026 includes the traditional access area, Closed Area II – South, combined with the Closed Area II-Extension.
- There are three independent scallop surveys of Area II and surrounding open areas (dredge, drop camera, and HabCam) that occurred in 2026. The 2026 surveys of eastern Georges Bank indicate substantial scallop recruitment, and it is anticipated that Area II will remain closed to scallop fishing for FY 2027.
- The 2026 surveys of eastern Georges Bank observed a decline in the amount of exploitable biomass in the eastern portion of Area II (Figure 1) and observed a moderate increase in exploitable biomass in the open bottom directly west of Area II in the Southern Flank (SF) Scallop Area Management Simulator (SAMS) area (Figure 2).

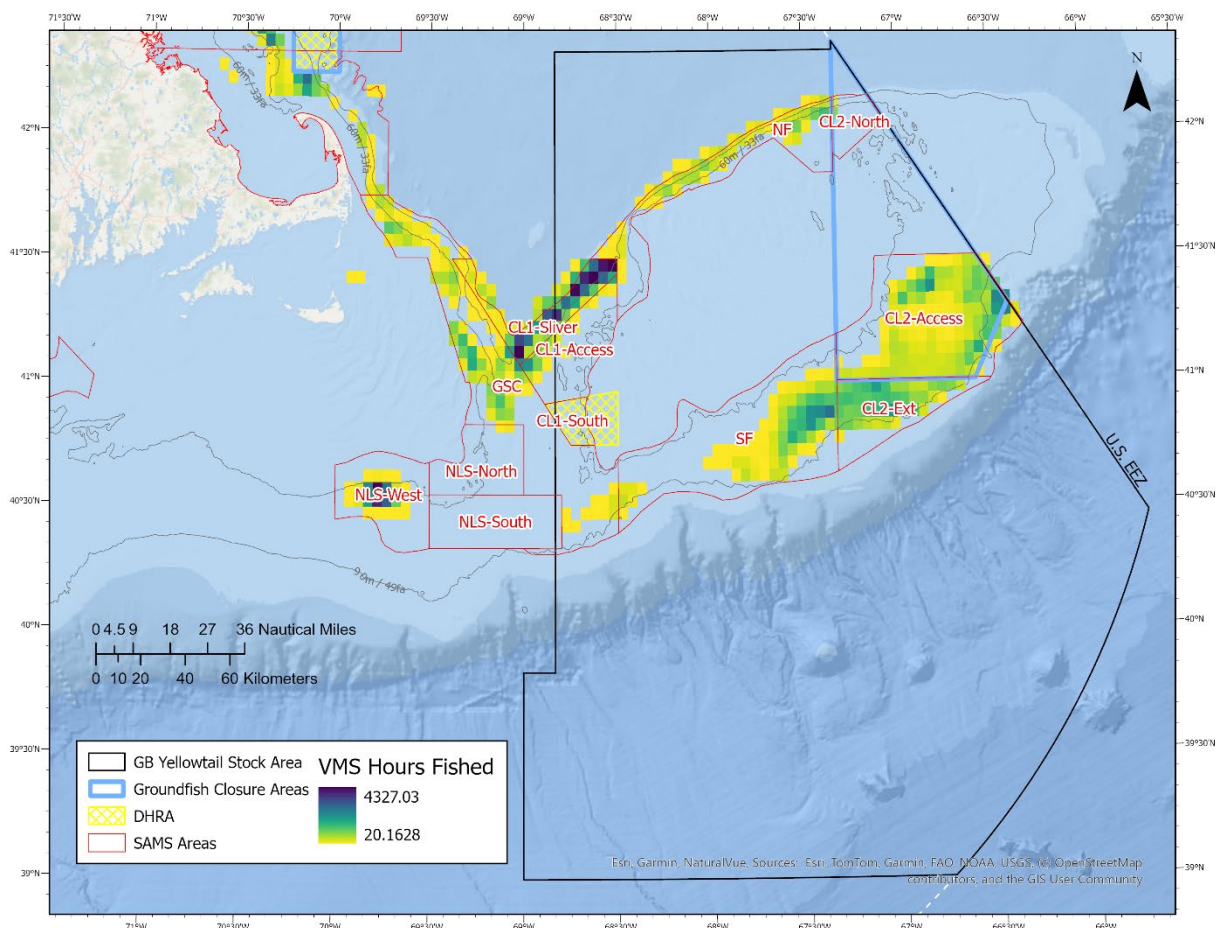
Figure 1. Mean recruited scallop density (scallop greater than 75 mm shell height per m²) at each station from the 2026 School of Marine Science and Technology Drop Camera Survey on Georges Bank.



Recent Scallop Fishery VMS Effort

- Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data were used to estimate scallop fishery effort in FY 2026 (Figure 2). These 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 5.5 kts was applied to remove vessel activity that was likely a result of transiting to and from fishing grounds.
- In FY 2025, scallop effort in the GB yellowtail stock area occurred mostly in CL1-Sliver, CL2-Access, CL2-Ext, 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 FY 2025, but to a lesser extent than what was observed in the SF.
- As seen in FY 2025 and in previous years, the PDT anticipates that substantial scallop fishery activity will continue in the open bottom directly west of Area II in the SF in FY 2026.

Figure 2. Scallop fishery effort in terms of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) hours fished for FY 2025 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 FY2025 was estimated to be approximately 19.6 mt, which is 131.7% of the FY 2025 sub-ACL (GARFO Quota Monitoring Scallop Bycatch Report). The Scallop PDT projected GB yellowtail bycatch to be about 1.8 mt for FY2026. In-season bycatch estimates are typically based on area-specific (i.e., in access areas and open areas) observed discard rates. For the 2026 bycatch projection, the PDT used data from observed trips between October 2024 and October 2025.
- The [Northeast Multispecies Framework 72](#) published August 4, 2026, setting the 2026 scallop sub-ACL at 4.8 mt. As of August 6, 2026, GB yellowtail bycatch has been estimated to be 0.46 mt ([NOAA Quota Monitoring](#)). This is 9.5% of the Framework 72 scallop fishery sub-ACL and 25.6% of the projected bycatch amount. A full description of the caveats and anticipated bycatch of GB yellowtail for FY 2026 is contained in Section 5.2 of Framework 40.
- Due to an overage of the northern windowpane flounder sub-ACL in FY 2024, the scallop fishery is subject to a reactive accountability measure (AM) for the duration of FY 2026 (April 1, 2026, through March 31, 2027). The reactive AM requires use of a modified dredge

(i.e., maximum 5-row apron with 1.5:1 hanging ratio) when fishing in Area II for the entirety of FY 2026. 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 ([Scallop PDT Memo re Scallop Fishery AMs](#)). The reactive AM triggers for both 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. Given this, while the scallop fishery did exceed the FY 2025 sub-ACL for GB yellowtail flounder, the stock ACL was not exceeded, the Scallop PDT does not anticipate that the AM would be in place again in FY 2027.

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).

FY	Total Shared TAC	US % Share	US TAC	% US TAC Caught	Scallop sub-ACL	Scallop catch	% Scallop sub-ACL Caught
2010	1,500	64%	1,200	68%	146	17.6	12%
2011	2,650	55%	1,458	76%	200.8	83.9	42%
2012	1,150	49%	564	68%	156.9	164.0	105%
2013	500	43%	215	43%	41.5	37.5	90%
2014*	400	82%	328	37%	50.9	59.0	116%
2015*	354	70%	248	28%	38	29.7	78%
2016*	354	76%	269	12%	42	2.1	5%
2017*	300	69%	207	44%	32	52.6	164%
2018*	300	71%	213	20%	33	12.7	38%
2019*	140	76%	106	4.6%	17	1.7	10%
2020*	162	74%	120	8.3%	18.6	1.5	8%
2021*	125	64%	80	38.4%	12	29.1	243%
2022*	200	61%	122	7.1%	19	7.8	40.8%
2023*	200	53%	106	18.8%	17	19.5	118.4%
2024*	168	42%	70	9.3%	14.9	5.0	33.3%
2025*	168	42%	70		14.9	19.6	131.7%
2026*	57	54%	31		4.8		
* retention of GB yellowtail prohibited for scallop fishery NOAA Quota Monitoring							

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: https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/B.2-160805-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-attachments_corrected-081716.pdf
August 2, 2017	See page 7: 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
July 27, 2018	See page 7: https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/A6_180809-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-attachment.pdf
August 13, 2019	https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Doc.9-190813_Scallop-PDT-memo-to-Groundfish-PDT-re-GB-yellowtail.pdf
August 12, 2020	See page 11: https://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/5a_200821-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-with-Scallop-PDT-memo_200921_093835.pdf
August 9, 2021	https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Doc.3e-210809-Scallop-PDT-memo-to-Groundfish-PDT-re-GB-yellowtail.pdf
August 11, 2022	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
September 1, 2023	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
July 23, 2024	2.b.iii_240723-GF-PDT-memo-to-SSC-re-GB-yellowtail-flounder-OFLs-and-ABCs-2025-2026-with-Scallop-PDT-memo-r.pdf
September 22, 2025	