



## New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116

John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

June 25, 2021

Dr. Jonathan Hare  
Science and Research Director  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
Woods Hole, MA 02543

Dear Jon:

On June 22, 2021 the Council discussed research priorities for the next Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) announcement. The attached list includes the Council's recommendations for Scallop RSA research priorities for the 2022/2023 award cycle. This year, the Council recommended resource surveys as the highest priority. The Council also identified two research areas as high priority (i.e., scallop biology and sea turtle research), and three general research needs (i.e., scallop recruitment supplementation, bycatch, gear). The high priority and general research needs are not listed in rank order and are of equal importance within their respective categories. The Scallop Plan Development Team, Advisory Panel, and Oversight Committee all provided input to the Council ahead of the June 2021 meeting.

Thank you for considering this input. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas A. Nies".

Thomas A. Nies  
Executive Director

cc: Michael Pentony, GARFO  
enclosure: (1)

## Attachment

### SURVEYS (Highest Priority)

#### 1. Survey Related Research

Survey results must be available by early August of the year in which the survey is conducted (e.g., survey results that would inform 2023 fishing effort decisions must be available by mid-August 2022). The survey or surveys do not need to be carried out by a single grant recipient. Survey data will be used to develop estimates of total and exploitable biomass to be used for setting fishery catch limits and allocations. Successful projects may be asked to provide data in a standardized format. The primary objective of these surveys would be to provide length-frequencies, abundance and biomass estimates that are used by the Scallop Plan Development Team.

1a. An intensive industry-based survey of each of the relevant scallop rotational areas (In rank order: Closed Area II, Elephant Trunk and Hudson Canyon, Nantucket Lightship, Closed Area I) that will provide estimates of total and exploitable biomass to be used for setting fishery catch limits under the rotational area management program.

1b. an intensive industry-based survey of areas of importance (i.e., open areas with scallop recruitment or areas of importance to the fishery). For 2022, the priority areas are where scallop recruitment was observed during recent surveys, and areas of the Gulf of Maine that have recently been or are likely to be fished, specifically the closure area on Stellwagen Bank.

1c. a resource wide industry-based survey of scallops within Georges Bank and/or Mid-Atlantic resource areas. The Georges Bank area includes areas east of Cape Cod, and the area of the Gulf of Maine south of the Northern Gulf of Maine management area.

#### High Priority Non-survey research (equal priority – not in ranked order)

2. Scallop Biology: Research on scallop biology, including studies aimed at understanding recruitment processes (e.g., reproduction, timing of spawning, larval and early post-settlement stages, age and growth, and yield), spatial population dynamics of the scallop resource, and examination of environmental stressors on reproduction and growth. This priority also includes research on natural mortality processes, such as scallop predation (e.g., starfish, crab, snails), discard mortality, juvenile mortality events, and disease and parasites. The results of biology research should be informative to scallop stock assessments and projection models (current and future) and to support decision-making by fishery managers.

3. Turtles: Research to support the investigation of turtle behavior in the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank (via satellite tagging or other means). This could include, but is not limited to, research to understand their seasonal movements, vertical habitat utilization, and the status and range of the population in response to climate change. This could also include research on gear design to reduce incidental takes of ESA-listed species. This research could assist in the collection of data that may be required by current or future biological opinions, to address reasonable and prudent measures of the biological opinion and could be used to evaluate current turtle regulations (EX: timing and spatial extent of gear modifications).

General Research Needs (equal priority - not in rank order)

4. Scallop Recruitment Supplementation: Research to develop the tools, such as spat collection, grow out of juvenile scallops, predator control, and offshore seeding, to supplement natural recruitment of scallops for the federally managed scallop fishery. Research could focus on the development of standards and best practices for using husbandry techniques to enhance the wild capture fishery or could evaluate the economic feasibility of enhancement efforts.

5. Bycatch: Identification and evaluation of methods to reduce the impacts of the scallop fishery with respect to bycatch of small scallops and non-target species. This would include projects that determine seasonal bycatch rates of non-target species, characterize spatial and temporal distribution patterns, collect and analyze catch and bycatch data on a near-real time basis, as well as the associated discard mortality rates of key bycatch species. Research efforts focusing on non-target bycatch should provide results that would help the scallop industry avoid pending or potential implementation of accountability measures. Projects should consider the enforceability and feasibility of regulations in the commercial fishery.

6. Gear: Commercial dredge research to improve scallop catch efficiency, improve scallop size selectivity, reduce scallop damage (discard and incidental mortality), reduce non-target species bycatch, and to reduce fuel consumption.