



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop Committee Meeting

May 23, 2019

Hilton Hotel, Providence RI

The Scallop Committee met in Providence, RI on May 23, 2019 to: 1) provide input on the potential harvest of small scallops in the NLS-S-deep, 2) review Amendment 21 scoping comments and recommend next steps to the Council, 3) develop recommendations on 2020/2021 Scallop RSA research priorities, 4) provide input on approaches to mitigate impacts on yellowtail flounder, and 5) discuss other business.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

Vincent Balzano (Committee Chair), Jonathon Peros (Plan Coordinator), Sam Asci (Council staff), Peter Christopher (GARFO), Travis Ford (GARFO), Melanie Griffin (for David Peirce), Matt Gates, Roger Mann, Cheri Patterson (for Doug Grout), John Pappalardo, Melissa Smith (for Pat Keliher), Peter Hughes, Mike Sissenwine, Eric Reid, and Terry Stockwell.

Jim Gutowski, Scallop AP Chair, was in attendance along with approximately 10 members of the public in the audience.

MEETING MATERIALS: Doc.1 [Meeting Agenda](#), Doc.1a [Staff presentation](#); Doc.1b [Meeting Memo from Committee Chair, Mr. Vincent Balzano](#); 2. [Amendment 21](#): Doc.2a [Summary of all Amendment 21 scoping Comments](#), Doc.2b [Summaries of Amendment 21 Scoping Meetings \(Oral comments\)](#); Doc.2c [Written comments for Amendment 21 scoping](#), Doc.2d [Amendment 21 scoping document](#), Doc.2e [Draft Amendment 21 Action Plan](#), Doc.2f [Summary of SARC 65 Gulf of Maine reviewer comments](#), Doc.2g [Staff presentation on Amendment 21 scoping comments](#); 3. [RSA Program Review](#): Doc.3a [RSA Program Review](#), Doc.3b [Program Review presentation \(Ms. Deirdre Boelke presentation\)](#), Doc.3c [Draft Scallop PDT input on Program Review Findings \(May 9, 2019\)](#), Doc.3d [RSA Program Review Findings and Recommendations Table](#); 4. [2020/2021 Scallop RSA](#): Doc.4a [Summary of Recent RSA Awards](#), Doc.4b [2019/2020 Scallop RSA award announcements \(NEFMC\)](#), Doc.4c [Input from Scallop PDT – 2020/2021 Research Priorities](#), Doc.4d [2019/2020 Scallop RSA Federal Funding Opportunity](#), Doc.4e [2019 – 2023 Council Research Priorities - Scallop Priorities](#); 5. [PDT Meeting Summaries](#): Doc.5a [April 4, 2019 Conference Call](#), Doc.5b [May 9, 2019 Conference Call](#); 6. [Materials for NOAA Update](#): Doc.6a [Shell stock compliance guide](#), Doc.6b [Clarification of vessel replacement policy](#); Doc.7 [Correspondence](#)

KEY OUTCOMES:

- *The Committee recommended that the Council allocate the small scallops in the NLS-S-deep for harvest in 2020/2021 specifications.*
- *The Committee recommended a range of alternatives be developed through Amendment 21 that focus on NGOM management measures, LAGC IFQ possession limits, and the one-way transfer of IFQ from LA vessels with IFQ permits to LAGC IFQ-only vessels.*
- *The Committee developed input on 2020/2021 Scallop RSA Research Priorities.*

The meeting began at 9:06 am. Following introductions, Committee Chair Vincent Balzano reviewed the agenda and goals for the meeting. Jonathon Peros (Council staff) provided the Committee with a brief update on implementation of Framework 30 and FY2019 specifications, performance of the FY2019 NGOM fishery, and recent open area catch rates thus far in fishing year 2019.

NLS-S-Deep Discussion

Council staff provided an overview of information presented the previous day by Dr. Dave Rudders of Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) related to on-going research of the slow growing scallops in the NLS-S-deep (see [Doc.2a](#) from the May 21, 2019 joint AP/PDT meeting). Key points from discussion following the presentation included:

- It was noted that the PDT's perspective on the slow growing scallops in the NLS-S-deep is that there is no biological reason not to harvest them. Recent PDT discussion noted that these scallops could persist in high densities until around age 10 or 11, at which time abundance may start to decline.
- Committee discussion clarified that the NLS-S-deep scallops that can be selected by the commercial gear have been considered in the ACL flowchart, but none of the slow growing scallops have been included in projected landings in the past.
- Regarding discussion to date on allowing shell stocking in the NLS-S-deep, Council staff noted that there are ways that the Scallop FMP could be adjusted to support harvest of the slow growing scallops. It was noted that the NLS-S-deep scallops represent a unique circumstance in the scallop resource, and that it may be unnecessary to change the Scallop FMP to address an issue that may not happen again.
- GARFO staff noted that there are avenues through Council action and LOAs to facilitate harvest of the slow growing scallops, but that it will take some continued discussion to figure out the best mechanism. The preference of NMFS would be for the Council allocates these scallops if it is interested in them being harvested—then, the Council and GARFO could work together to figure out the right exemptions that can be applied to make it happen. It was also noted that equity is an important factor to consider if the Council does wish to move forward.
- Overall, the Committee supported moving forward with including the slow growing scallops in the NLS-S-deep in specifications for FY2020/2021 (see Motion 1 below).

Motion 1: Reid/Stockwell

The Committee tasks the PDT to develop options for the utilization of scallops in the NLS-S-deep area for the 2020/2021 FY specifications package.

Rationale: These scallops will be 8 years old in 2020/2021 but are not expected to recruit to the fishery. In considering an allocation, the PDT should evaluate existing access area boundaries in the Nantucket Lightship area, as well as the size of the high-density area in the NLS-S-deep. In considering this, the PDT should consider research needs, and options for exemptions, EFPs and/LOAs. The PDT should consult with members of the industry in the development of options.

The motion carried on a show of hands (11-0-0).

Discussion on Motion 1:

- Several members of the audience voiced support for Motion 1. They also felt that it will be important to be consider how a NLS-S-deep allocation is administered to the fishery, specifically how the normal allocation process could result in additional quota being allocated to the LAGC IFQ component that could be fished elsewhere in the resource. It was also suggested that focused meetings be held to gather more industry input on the best way to harvest these scallops.
- Another member of the audience referred to the harvest approach idea that is included in correspondence (see [Doc.7](#)) and suggested that the Committee consider using a Calico scallop boat with an automatic shucker to harvest the slow growing scallops.

Amendment 21 Scoping Summary Discussion

Council staff presented an overview of comments received during the scoping period for Amendment 21 to the Scallop FMP (see Doc.2a [Summary of all Amendment 21 scoping Comments](#) and Doc.2g [Staff presentation on Amendment 21 scoping comments](#)). Following the presentation, there was one question from the Committee which clarified that A21 comments on a consistent gear requirement in the NGOM were supporting the use of a maximum 10.5' dredge for all vessels fishing in the area in the future.

Council staff noted that this is the Committee's opportunity to suggest next steps for Amendment 21, such as establishing goals and(or) objectives for each issue, recommending a range of alternatives to be developed for each issue, and(or) developing tasking for the Scallop PDT. Staff suggested that a good starting point would be to discuss/reaffirm the Amendment 11 vision statement for the LAGC fishery before providing input on the issues being addressed in A21.

Motion 2: Griffin/Patterson:

The Committee reaffirms the Amendment 11 vision statement for the LACG as:

“a fleet made up of relatively small vessels, with possession limits to maintain the historical character of this fleet and provide opportunities to various participants including vessels from smaller coastal communities.”

Motion to amend: Sissenwine/Pappalardo:

“a fleet made up of relatively small vessels, to maintain the historical character of this fleet and provide opportunities to various participants including vessels from smaller coastal communities.”

Rationale: Possession limits are one of many ways to achieve the vision. Preference is to not build in ways to achieve a vision.

The motion to amend failed on a show of hands (2-9-0).

The main motion carried on a show of hands (11-0-0).

Discussion on Motion 2 and Motion 2a:

- Those interested in amending Motion 2 to exclude “possession limits” from the A11 vision statement felt that this language could preclude the Council from increasing the trip limit despite this issue being scoped for in A21. They were also generally opposed to measures that intentionally reduce efficiency.
- Others on the Committee and in the audience felt strongly that the A11 vision statement should not be changed. They noted that A11 did not include restrictions on crew size or vessel size for the LAGC IFQ component, and that the possession limit has been the primary tool in ensuring the LAGC IFQ component remains a small boat fishery.
- A member of the audience suggested that if the Committee were to consider revising the Amendment 11 vision statement, it should also consider amending the original goal and objective of Amendment 11.

The following sections summarize Committee discussion and motions specific to each issue being addressed in Amendment 21.

A21 Discussion: Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area**Motion 3: Stockwell/Patterson**

Recommend that the Council approve the objectives for NGOM in A21 as:

1. Support a growing directed scallop fishery in federal waters in the NGOM.
2. Allow for orderly access to the scallop resource in this area by the LAGC and LA components.
3. Establish mechanisms to set allowable catch and accurately monitor catch and bycatch from the NGOM.

Rationale: These objectives are intended to support the Council’s vision for the LAGC component in the NGOM.

The motion carried on a show of hands (11-0-0).

Discussion on Motion 3 was very brief. A member of the audience found the wording of item #1 to be frustrating—they felt that the Council should be less concerned with a “growing” fishery in the NGOM when LA vessels are working for 50-60 days and are idle the rest of the year.

Motion 4: Stockwell/Patterson

The Committee moves to:

Task PDT to develop alternatives that will hardwire future access for the LA fishery in NGOM based upon increased stock biomass levels

Rationale: There is a need for additional analyses to determine future access and base future allocation decisions. Alternatives should consider at what point the LA can access a directed fishery in the NGOM, and at what level. Pre-determine a level of biomass that would trigger (hardwire) how and when the LA allocation in the can be fished in this area. Develop alternatives for an allocation sharing formula.

The motion carried on a show of hands (11-0-0).

Discussion on Motion 4:

- A member of the audience understood the intent of Motion 4 but disagreed with the way it was written because they felt it suggests LA vessels are not currently able to fish in the NGOM. They noted that LA vessels qualified to fish in federal waters, including federal waters within the NGOM.
- The Committee clarified that Motion 4 tasked the PDT with analyzing alternatives for a TAC sharing formula at a range of biomass thresholds to support a policy decision by the Committee and Council at a later date.

Motion 5: Stockwell/Patterson

The Committee moves to:

Task PDT to develop alternatives that will minimize the current derby style fishery, including but not limited to one sailing per calendar day.

Rationale: Current derby scenario creates opportunities for some, but not others. Looking to expand opportunities across the fishing year, particularly if the biomass is dispersed across the NGOM area.

The motion carried on a show of hands (11-0-0).The motion carried on a show of hands: 12-1-0.

Discussion on Motion 5:

- A member of the audience was hesitant of reducing the derby-stlye fishery at this point in time because NGOM fisherman did not think it was necessary. They felt that the negative impacts of typical “derby fisheries” do not apply to the NGOM and therefore measures

should not be developed to manage around them. They also suggested that there is always going to be a drive to compete for catch and that this will not be minimized by changing the number of times a vessel can sail in one day.

- Another member of the audience felt the derby fishery in the NGOM to be an issue worth investigating—they suggested taking a more holistic approach when developing solutions, such as considering the DAS allocation with a 200-pound trip limit idea put forth during scoping.
- Several Committee members agreed that this issue is worth exploring and that it is the right time in development of A21 to do so.

Motion 6: Stockwell/Pappalardo

The Committee moves to:

1. Task PDT to develop alternatives that will reliably monitor and report NGOM catch and bycatch.

Rationale: There is not an IFM program in place for the NGOM management area. This includes evaluating the mechanisms that are used to determine a closure of the area.

The motion carried on a show of hands (11-0-0).

Discussion on Motion 6 was brief. The Committee clarified that this motion is intended to encompass reporting (i.e. such as eVTR) as well as improving the mechanism currently used to monitor the NGOM TAC and accurately determine when it should be closed.

Motion 7: Stockwell/Patterson

The Committee moves to:

Task PDT to develop alternatives that will establish a NGOM RSA program.

Rationale: The pounds that support the current RSA program (1.25 million lbs) do not come from the Gulf of Maine.

The motion carried on a show of hands (11-0-0).

Discussion on Motion 7:

- The Committee noted that the current Scallop FMP is structured to establish a NGOM RSA program—one Committee member suggested moving forward with this now as opposed to waiting for Amendment 21 to be implemented.
- There were questions on how a NGOM RSA program would be structured relative to the overall Scallop RSA program (i.e. would a NGOM RSA be handled separately, or as part of the overall RSA program), and where the set-aside would come from to support a NGOM research program. A member of the audience noted that scallops from Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic have funded RSA surveys in the NGOM recently—they felt that NGOM

scallops should be included in the set-aside if research continues to be awarded in the NGOM in the future.

- The Committee felt these questions raised valid points and supported Motion 7 because it will move towards the NGOM having some skin in the game relative to the Scallop RSA program.

Motion 8: Stockwell/Patterson

The Committee moves to:

Task PDT to develop alternatives that will consider a fishery wide GRA in the NGOM and GOM dredge exemption area.

Rationale: Explore a GRA in these areas based on scoping comments the Council received.

The motion carried on a show of hands (7/3/1).

Discussion on Motion 8:

- Discussion pointed out that there are varying definitions of the Gulf of Maine. It was noted that the GOM Dredge Exemption Area boundary follows the same footprint of the NGOM but extends further south to encompass Cape Cod Bay and the backside of Cape Cod.
- GARFO staff was hesitant of Motion 8 because the NGOM is considered separate from the rest of the resource and is not surveyed regularly, whereas this isn't the case for the GOM Dredge Exemption Area. They suggested that, if Motion 8 passes, to develop separate GRA alternatives for the NGOM vs. the waters in the GOM Dredge Exemption Area south of the NGOM.
- Staff noted that applying a GRA to federal waters south of the NGOM management area was not scoped for—scoping was focused only on the NGOM. A member of the Committee acknowledged this, but felt it shouldn't preclude the PDT from investigating how a GRA would work in the GOM outside of the NGOM management area—they felt some areas may be suited for a GRA such as Stellwagen Bank and parts of the Great South Channel.
- Several members of the audience were strongly opposed to Motion 8. They felt it is unnecessary to create more inefficiencies on LA vessels through this action, especially considering that this issue wasn't scoped for. One member of the audience suggested applying a GRA to LA vessels fishing in the NGOM or GOM is an allocation issue because it is not economically feasible for LA vessels to fish one 10.5' dredge. Another member of the audience stated that excluding LA vessels from the NGOM and GOM is outside the scope of Amendment 21 and that a GRA provides no added value in achieving optimum yield.
- A member of the audience supported Motion 8 and suggested that the NGOM and other areas in the Gulf of Maine (i.e. outside of the NGOM) are known for having patchy scallop grounds and felt that a 10.5' dredge GRA would be a good way to meter removals in the future. Others in support of Motion 8 felt it was worth analyzing GRA options as opposed to striking these alternatives from the Amendment.

Motion 9: Stockwell/Pappalardo

The Committee recommends that the Council develop an alternative that would remove the requirement for state licensed scallopers with IFQ permits to use their IFQ when fishing in state waters of the NGOM during the state season.

Rationale: IFQ vessels fishing in the state waters fishery are required to use quota when operating in state waters fishery. Create parity for NGOM and IFQ vessels in state waters.

The motion carried on a show of hands (10-0-1).

Discussion on Motion 9:

- The Committee discussed whether this issue is within the scope of Amendment 21. Some felt that creating an exemption for IFQ utilization in state waters would be best handled in a separate action through the State Waters Exemption Program. Others felt this could be addressed in Amendment 21 because it is focused on state waters within the NGOM management area.
- It was noted that the scoping document was particular about IFQ usage in federal waters of the NGOM, not IFQ usage in state waters. Some felt that more people would have commented on this issue if the scoping document included IFQ usage in state waters of the NGOM.
- There were some concerns of disparity in the LAGC IFQ fleet in that special circumstances would be developed just for IFQ vessels in state water fisheries of the NGOM (i.e. Massachusetts and Maine).

A21 Discussion: LAGC IFQ Possession Limits

Motion 10: Pappalardo/Griffin:

The Committee tasks the PDT to develop a range of alternatives for LAGC IFQ possession limit up to 1,200 lbs per trip in Amendment 21.

Rationale: The Committee tasks the PDT to look at trip limits at 600 lbs, 800 lbs, 1000 lbs, and 1200 lbs. A trip limit increase would give a portion of the fleet more opportunity to manage their business more efficiently and safely. If you can harvest 1,200 lbs a day, you reduce the number of trips (times in/out of inlet) and fuel consumption. Longer steam times are currently required to catch trip limit. A 600 lb trip limit is OK if there was an inshore fishery. This would give small boats more flexibility, and vessels don't have to catch 1,200 a day (they could catch less). The LAGC IFQ performance review showed an increase in the number of smaller vessels following a 200 lb increase (400 lbs to 600 lbs), and stability in the number of active vessels within vessel size classes.

The motion carried on a show of hands: 10-0-0.

Motion 11: Pappalardo/Griffin

The Committee tasks the PDT to develop a range of alternatives in Amendment 21 that would consider increasing the LAGC IFQ possession limits in access areas ONLY.

Rationale: Look at trip limits at 600lbs, 800 lbs, 1000 lbs, and 1200 lbs. This could improve efficiency when fishing in access areas that require a long steam time to reach.

The motion carried on a show of hands 10-0-0.

Discussion on Motion 10 and Motion 11 was brief. One member of the Committee expressed support for analysis of a higher trip limit only in access areas (Motion 11). Another member of the Committee felt it will be important to analyze how a higher trip limit might change fishing behavior of LA vessels with IFQ.

A21 Discussion: One-way transfer of quota from LA with IFQ to LAGC IFQ-only vessels

Motion 12: Hughes/Pappalardo

The Committee tasks the PDT to develop a range of alternatives for the temporary and permanent one-way transfer of IFQ from LA with IFQ to LAGC IFQ only to be developed in Amendment 21.

Rationale: The Committee would like to see both permanent and temporary analyzed as part of A21. The alternatives would look at annual leasing and permanent transfers.

The motion carried on the show of hands 10-0-0.

There was no discussion on Motion 12.

Unrelated to Motion 12, a member of the Committee called attention to the anonymous scoping comments submitted which described business practices of some LAGC IFQ permit holders in the leasing sector. They noted that the Council cannot control the business side of the fisheries they manage, but expressed concern around the way some managers operate in and outside of the Council process.

2020/2021 Scallop RSA Priorities Discussion

Council staff briefly reviewed recently funded RSA projects for 2019 and 2020 and presented initial PDT and AP input on potential 2020/2021 RSA priorities, and key points from priorities discussion during the joint AP and PDT meeting two days before. Motions considered by the Committee and key discussion points on 2020/2021 Scallop RSA priorities included:

Motion 13: Pappalardo/Patterson

The Committee recommends that the Council adopt 2020/2021 Scallop RSA Research Priorities that are listed in the Combined PDT and AP input, attached to these motions (pages 5 and 6).

The motion carried on a show of hands. 9-0-0.

Note: Committee recommendations for 2020/2021 Scallop RSA priorities can be seen [here](#).

Discussion on Motion 13:

- The Committee discussion around offshore wind focused on data needs. Committee members voiced support for developing and documenting a “baseline” before construction begins. Concern was expressed around the impact offshore wind could have on the ability of vessels to conduct surveys within the array.
- Some interest was expressed in research focusing on how vessels could fish within the footprint of wind farms.
- To a point about cross-program coordination, the Chair of the EBFM committee noted that one of the work priorities for that group was the development of an ecosystem wide research program.
- A Committee member said that they were in support of the wind priority but preferred the development of an overall strategy to the way that the agency and the Council will assemble information and address the impacts of wind impacts on fisheries. They felt that addressing the impacts of offshore wind on fisheries could not effectively be done with a piece-meal approach, and right now there does not seem to be an overarching research plan. They generally felt that an overall strategy that was agreed to by a community of people who have a stake in this issue would be more useful than the proposed language in the FFO. The Committee did not consider new language for the wind research priority in the scallop FFO.
- A Committee member felt that ranking surveys as a “high” priority could result in an advantage to survey proposals during the RSA evaluation and selection process. While they stated that the outcomes of scallop RSA project selection have not been unreasonable, they felt that the implication of the binning/ranking was that surveys are high and everything else is low. Council staff explained that in the past, priority rank has been considered when proposals have very similar technical and management reviews. Mr. Ryan Silva from GARFO went on to explain that reviewers see the research topics and priority ranking as part of review process, which may inform how they score proposals. They expressed concern that additional surveys that may not be needed could be funded over other key issues like impacts of wind energy on the basis that surveys are a “high” priority, but reiterated that this is a hypothetical and felt that NOAA makes good judgements project funding. They suggested that the RSA program should fund what is “needed” for surveys, and use the remaining pounds to award other projects.

- A Committee member stated that they supported to motion on the board, and went on to note that there had been discussions at the May 21, 2019 RSA Share Day around multi-year funding for surveys so that there could be a coordinated effort of all survey groups to develop a better survey design that would be more cost efficient, and would be designed to provide information into management. They felt that the FFO language could include more specific requirements to end up with the final product that the Council envisioned when it recommended the priority. They also felt that binning priorities could be a tool to structure long-term planning in terms of topics that might be in the FFO for one year vs. issues that might have a longer time horizon. It was also noted that the Council might want to transition the FFO as a tool for longer term planning versus a list of interesting research topics. They felt that if scallop surveys transition to a coordinated and optimized approach, that process does not lend itself well to the annual priority setting process.
- Another Committee member felt that the current RSA process of funding surveys for one or two years was inefficient and suggested that substantial time was required in proposal development and in the review process.
- Members of the Committee felt that scallop surveys are needed through the RSA process, but were open to changing the priority rank to “no ranking” based on the discussion. A member of the Committee felt that there would be an implied budgeting to ensure surveys were funded.
- Mr. Pete Christopher from GARFO stated that there needs to be an explicit understanding that survey work would be funded through the RSA program. He also noted that in most cases the RSA priorities invite proposals, but in the case of #8 Data Collection in Gulf of Maine, there language invites proposals about how to do surveys (vs. doing the surveys). It was noted that the expectations about how a successful proposal would be used. For example, if a project was funded, would that RSA proposal set the survey design?
- Council staff noted that there is not a dedicated scallop survey in the GOM, and explained that the genesis of this priority was the SARC 65 peer-review comments. Staff noted that the GOM holds a small part of the overall scallop resource, and that survey work in the area is exclusively funded through the annual RSA priority setting process. Staff acknowledged some of the similarities that this priority has to RSA program review recommendations, but suggested that the state of scallop science in the GOM is not in the same place as Georges Bank or the Mid-Atlantic.

RSA Program Review Recommendations Discussion

Dr. Michael Sissenwine, Chair of the RSA program review presented the recommendations from the RSA program review. He noted that a master table of all of the RSA Program Review recommendations was circulated as a meeting material, and was a useful tool to gather further input from people about what they think is important.

Dr. Sissenwine attended the RSA Share Day on May 21, 2019 and recapped some of the day's discussion:

- *Recommendation 3: To clarify the role of RSA, the NEFMC should adopt a mission statement for RSA.* There was mixed input on this recommendation at the Share Day. Industry members noted that flexibility was a current strength of the program.
- *Recommendation 4: A series of options for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of resource surveys for scallops should be considered.* There was general agreement at the May 21 Share Day that this is an area where more attention is needed. There was no agreement on what the methodology should be, and that is still something to be debated.

Council Staff recapped where Committee members could find the Scallop PDT's input on how to proceed with recommendations for the RSA program review, and reviewed a handout focusing on input on RSA Program Review.

- The PDT generally felt that development of an RSA mission statement would be useful next step, though this sentiment was not shared by all at the Share Day (see above).
- Expanding on the recap of the RSA Share Day that was provided by Dr. Sissenwine, staff also noted that was interest in exploring elements of Recommendation 4. At the Share Day, survey groups noted some of the challenges associated with operating a survey program on annual awards.
- There were several recommendations that members of the scallop PDT scored as important/very important:

2.1.b. PDTs with NEFSC identify status of each priority, continued need, specific deliverable needed, and when it may be time to remove items from the list. Very Important (n=3)
2.2.a NMFS should improve communications about RSA process.
2.4.a.1 Establish standard procedures on how to specify value estimated for each program. (Price estimates)
2.6.a NMFS and NEFMC should prepare a detailed time table for steps from priority setting to awarding RSA grants (Priority setting)
2.8.d More formal communication of progress reports could be shared with PDT, Advisory Panels, and Committees to improve monitoring/accountability or RSA awards (feedback into management)

5. NMFS, in consultation with the Council, should evaluate and document RSA program administrative capacity to determine where support is sufficient and where it could or should be increased; the RSA review panel supports a dedicated evaluation of resources.

Committee Discussion:

- The Committee considered what the next steps for the program review might be. Dr. Sissenwine suggested that at an upcoming meeting, the Council may wish to address whether to try to improve the RSA program within the context of annual grants, or is there another approach that can be pursued, such as an omnibus FMP.
- In terms of survey design, Dr. Sissenwine explained that he thought a cooperative agreement could be a way to develop a more rigorous scientifically based survey approach that would include all interested parties, including NMFS (Recommendation 4, Option 3). This is something that the Council may want to weigh in on, or guide. Council staff noted that the Scallop PDT provided some input on recommendation 4, highlighted that there was some question as to who should lead a cooperative agreement that evaluates survey design (NMFS vs. other groups). The Committee noted some of the pros-cons between using a cooperative agreement vs. NMFS determining a survey design.

14. By consensus:

The Scallop Committee has reviewed RSA Program Review recommendations 1 - 6, and supports moving them forward for further consideration.

1. When it comes to making changes in NEFMC RSA programs, caution should be exercised not to “screw up a good thing.”
2. Several ideas for improving RSA programs that emerged during this review should be considered by the NEFMC and NMFS.
3. To clarify the role of RSA, the NEFMC should adopt a mission statement for RSA.
4. A series of options for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of resource surveys for scallops should be considered.
5. NMFS, in consultation with the Council, should evaluate and document RSA program administrative capacity to determine where support is sufficient and where it could or should be increased.
6. The NEFMC should consider preparing an Omnibus FMP for Research Set Aside Programs that would be available for all fisheries under the jurisdiction of the Council.

Rationale: The Committee supports considering improvements and changes to the RSA program.

Discussion on Mitigating Impacts to GB Yellowtail Flounder

Committee discussion was directed towards the 2019 work priority “action to mitigate impacts on yellowtail flounder”. The Committee tasked the PDT with analyzing the options for reducing GB yellowtail bycatch through either seasonal closures and(or) reduced hanging ratio requirements. Council staff provided an overview of the Committee tasking and PDT input to

date on this priority, as well as an overview of the annual TRAC/TMGC process. Key points from discussion on this agenda item included:

- The Committee asked for clarification on the intent of the AP recommendation to develop a time/area closure to mitigate impacts to GB yellowtail “if needed”. Council staff noted that the AP was interested in developing alternatives for a time/area closure to reduce GB yellowtail bycatch; however, they felt that, if new information becomes available that changes the outlook for the GB yellowtail stock or the potential for scallop fishery bycatch, it might not be necessary implement additional constraints on the scallop fishery.
- The Committee agreed to move forward with developing options for time/area closures on Georges Bank to mitigate scallop fishery impacts to GB yellowtail (see consensus statement #15).

15: By consensus:

Committee tasks the PDT with developing time/area closure options in two week increments from August 1 – December 31 to mitigate the impact on Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and Northern windowpane flounder in an upcoming management action if an action is necessary.

NOAA Update on Shell Stock Compliance Guide and Vessel Replacement Policy

Travis Ford (GARFO) briefly informed the Committee of updates made to a compliance guide that is aimed at helping fishermen and dealers when possession and landing in-shell scallops (see [Doc.6a](#)). Mr. Ford reviewed the updated guide and asked that the Committee contact him with any questions or input before it is published.

Mr. Ford also gave a brief overview of the vessel replacement policy and recent updates which clarify the criteria that need to be met to justify a vessel replacement (see [Doc.6b](#)). Discussion following the presentation clarified that the vessel replacement policy applies to scallop, groundfish, and monkfish vessels.

Other Business

A member of the Committee noted the AP’s continued support for developing ways to access the Northern Edge and their feeling that the Scallop Committee should play a larger role in this effort moving forward. They noted the Council has signaled that developing options for scallop fishery access in the Northern Edge would be handled through the Habitat Committee; however, they suggested that it may be worthwhile to elevate discussion to the Council level around the Scallop Committee’s role in developing options to access Habitat Management Areas.

No other business was discussed. The meeting concluded at 4:34 PM.