



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Scallop PDT Meeting

May 22, 2017

The Scallop PDT met by conference call on May 22, 2017 to: 1) develop PDT recommendations for 2018/2019 scallop RSA research priorities; 2) receive an update on follow-up to the scallop survey peer review; 3) review background information on a Committee motion to set a control date which could restrict movement between LAGC permit categories (NGOM and Incidental); 4) review preliminary analyses on potential measures in Framework 29, specifically: a) Flatfish Accountability Measures, and b) Northern Gulf of Maine Management measures.

MEETING ATTENDANCE: Jonathon Peros (PDT Chair), Sam Asci, Trish Cheney, Dr. Bill DuPaul, Travis Ford, Ben Galuardi, Kevin Kelly, Danielle Palmer, Dr. David Bethoney, and Dr. Cate O'Keefe. Dr. Dvora Hart and Dr. David Rudders were participating in scallop survey work and unable to join this meeting. Several members of the public also joined the call.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- The PDT developed 2018/2019 Scallop RSA research priorities.

2018/2019 SCALLOP RSA DISCUSSION:

Council Staff walked through the RSA related documents that were shared with the PDT, and explained that the PDT's RSA recommendations would be forwarded on to the AP and Committee for consideration. As part of follow-up from the March 1, 2017 PDT meeting and in response to questions/comments raised at the May 4, 2017 joint AP/PDT meeting, Council staff presented information on scallop catches in trawl surveys in the Gulf of Maine from 1963-2014. Data sources used were: 1) NMFS bottom trawl (1963-2014); 2) NMFS shrimp trawl survey (1983-2014); 3) MA DMF bottom trawl survey (1978-2014); 4) The NH/ME DMR inshore trawl survey (2000-2012). Staff explained that this exercise was intended to broadly describe where trawl surveys had encountered scallops (figures show counts of scallops observed per tow) over time, recognizing that more recent scallop survey efforts in the Gulf of Maine have focused on areas that have held aggregations of scallops in the past. Staff explained that interpretation of the data should be done carefully, as the trawl surveys were not engineered to target scallops, and the information should not be used to draw conclusions about past, current, or future scallop biomass in the Gulf of Maine. With respect to recent fishing activity, Staff reviewed trawl data in relation to the areas that were fished by LA and LAGC in the NGOM in 2016 and 2017. Approximately 1/3 of hauls within the 2016/2017 fishing footprint captured and retained scallops. Trawl surveys

have sporadically overlapped with regularly fished scallop groups like Platts Bank. Finally, staff presented the data by five year increments.

The PDT had a brief discussion following the presentation, and noted that several scallop surveys have been conducted in the Gulf of Maine (NMFS in early 1980's, a DMR survey in the late 1970's, SMAST dropcam work in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2015). One member suggested that additional bathymetry contours be added to future maps to show depth. The group felt that additional work could be done to aggregate existing information on scallop populations in the Gulf of Maine.

Following the discussion of scallop catch in trawl surveys in the Gulf of Maine, the PDT shifted its focus to making 2018/2019 RSA research recommendations. The group considered input made through correspondence and at the May 4, 2017 joint AP/PDT during this discussion.

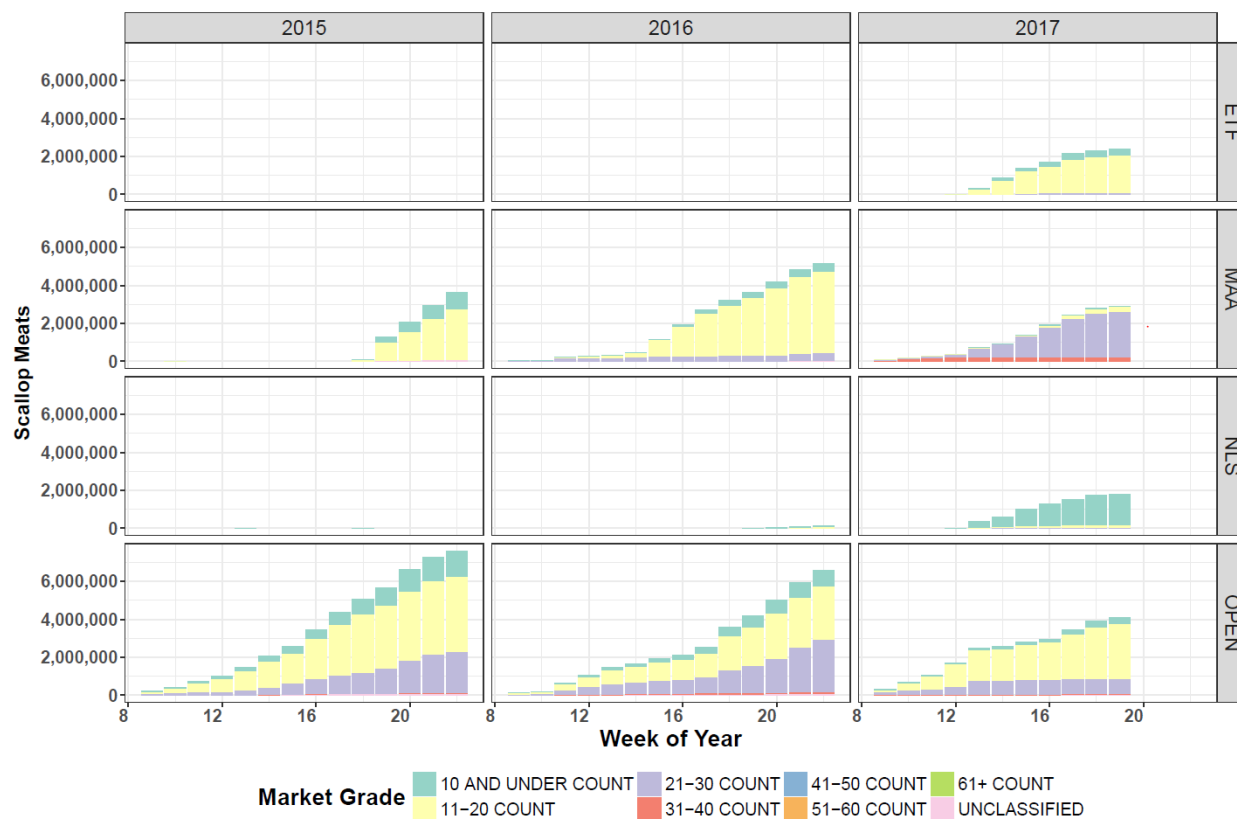
1. *#1a Intensive industry-based survey of relevant access areas:* The group recommended that the list include the Mid-Atlantic Access Area (all of Elephant Trunk, Hudson Canyon, and Delmarva), noting the strong recruitment in this area, and that area has been fished heavily for several years (8 access area trips per vessel in three years).
2. *#1b Intensive industry based survey of areas of importance:* The PDT recommended striking the language “candidate access areas in the future” in favor of “areas of importance” to broaden the priority by including areas that could be candidates for intensive surveys , and to not presuppose that all areas in this category would become access areas. The PDT recommended including the following areas under this priority: Nantucket Lightship HMA (closed portion), the “sliver” in HMA north of Closed Area I, and the HAPC in Closed Area II. The group also discussed adding specific areas within the NGOM Management Area as candidates for intensive survey work (Stellwagen Bank, Jeffreys Ledge, Platts Bank). See #3.
3. *#1b and #1c - Gulf of Maine and NGOM Management Area:* The PDT did not reach consensus on how position GOM/NGOM survey work as a HIGHEST priority. The group generally agreed that some elements of the GOM/NGOM survey should be elevated from the OTHER category to a high priority. Some members of the PDT felt that survey work should be focused on areas where scallops were recently observed and concentrated fishing has occurred. Other PDT members felt that surveys should include areas within the NGOM management area that have held scallops in the past. Because consensus was not reached, language addressing both recommendations was added for the Committee to consider. Finally, the group noted that the Council will be considering whether or not to prioritize a management action this fall.
4. *#1c Broad scale resource wide survey:* VIMS has received funding to conduct a broad scale dredge survey of the Mid-Atlantic through the 2017/2018 RSA in 2018. The group also noted that information on NEFSC transects and tow stations could help to determine the scope of what is needed from this IBS work, and where survey work is needed.
5. *#2 Bycatch Research* – The PDT recommended that enforceability of gear modifications in the commercial fishery should be added as a consideration in this priority.

6. *#3 Scallop Meat Quality Research and #5 Turtle Research* – The PDT discussed the linkage between turtles and nematodes, as well as information presented at the RSA Share Day by Dr. Samir Patel that showed loggerhead turtles foraging on Georges Bank and the presence of nematodes in other turtle species found in the region (green and Kemp’s ridley). Danielle Palmer of GARFO PRD shared information with the group about funding streams for turtle research outside of RSA process. The PDT agreed that sea turtles and scallop fishery can interact in two separate and distinct ways. #1: when directed effort overlaps with sea turtle presence on the scallop grounds (e.g. can interact with gear, takes, etc.); #2: Turtles serve as a host of nematodes, which infects Atlantic sea scallops, and can impact the marketability of infected scallops. Using this rationale, the PDT recommended adding language that underscores the linkage between turtles and scallop meat quality to #3 (HIGH priority), and to modify the language in #5 (MEDIUM priority) to relate turtle behavior research to scallop management in the Mid-Atlantic and on Georges Bank.
7. *#4 Non-harvest mortality of scallops*: The PDT recommended striking language from last year’s priority that referenced the upcoming benchmark assessment. Several members of the PDT indicated support for studying and quantifying predation (vs. controlling predation).
8. *#6 Scallop Spat and Seeding; Biology projects*: The PDT recommended elevating existing language around scallop biology to MEDIUM (from OTHER in 2016) with scallop spat and seeding projects. The rationale for this change is that there have been historically high recruitment events in several areas of the fishery in recent years, and that there are lots of things we still do not understand about these high-density areas.
9. *#7 Investigation of variability in dredge efficiency*: The PDT recommended separating out and modifying language around dredge efficiency in OTHER priorities (from OTHER in 2016). Two PDT members who have been involved in these studies were not on the call (Dr. Hart and Dr. Rudders), and the PDT was interested in their input on where research efforts into this topic currently stand.
10. *#10 LPUE research*: The PDT recommended broadening the former LPUE priority with language from the Council’s Draft Research Priorities and Data Needs for 2017 – 2021.
11. *#12 Social and Economic impacts and consequences of area rotation of the scallop fishery*: The PDT recommended adding this priority to the OTHER category. This priority came from the Council’s Draft Research Priorities and Data Needs for 2017 – 2021.

Following the priority recommendations, Mr. Benjamin Galuardi presented information on 2015, 2016, and 2017 landings by scallop grade (market category) and price, and LPUE. Mr. Galuardi broke this information out by regions within the open areas, as well as access areas. The PDT’s discussion primarily focused on the information presented in Figure 1. Members of the PDT felt that this information would be very useful when considering management strategies going forward.

Follow-up: Update figures presented in Doc#4 and develop VMS plots of fishing activity for the August PDT meeting (Ben Galuardi).

Figure 1 - Cumulative landings, by week and grade, in the first three months of fishing years 2015 - 2017 (to date for access and open areas).



UPDATE ON FOLLOW-UP TO SCALLOP SURVEY PEER-REVIEW

Council staff reported that the PDT's sub-group working on this item had met in April. The report from that meeting was circulated to the PDT for review. Due to time constraints, the PDT did not review the report in detail. Staff explained that the sub-group had identified several follow-up items to address (see page 1 of the report). Dr. Bill DuPaul and Dr. Cate O'Keefe provided their perspectives on the work to-date.

CONTROL DATE TO RESTRICT MOVEMENT BETWEEN LAGC NGOM AND LAGC INCIDENTAL PERMIT CATEGORIES

Council staff updated the group on the status of the Scallop Committee's motion to establish a control date to address the potential movement between LAGC Incidental and LAGC NGOM permit categories (Doc. #6). There were several questions from the PDT about changes to the number of NGOM and incidental permits between years (ex: 2008 – 2009). The PDT felt that it would be useful to see data on the number of times permits have flipped between a NGOM and incidental permit. GARFO staff explained that this could be done without serious effort, and can follow-up with the group with this data at a later date if the Council prioritizes work on this issue.

FLATFISH ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

Council staff presented information on pages 1 and 2 of Doc#7. The PDT received an update on bycatch reduction through gear modifications at its meeting on March 1, 2017 from Dr. Liese Siemann of the Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF). CFF gear studies show a reduction in flatfish bycatch and scallop catch between an 8-row and 5-row apron, and a 7-row and a 5-row apron (with modified hanging ratios). The percent reduction between the 8 vs. 5 row and 7 vs. 5 row configurations is substantial for windowpane flounder (46% reduction vs. 14% reduction). Staff noted that a pro-active AM of a maximum of 7-rows in the apron was adopted through FW25 and implanted during the 2014 fishing year. Given the changes in regulations and the apparent differences in flatfish reduction by the 5-row apron with 1.5:1 hanging ratio when compare to 7 and 8-row configurations, staff suggested that a key question in this process of developing AMs is to understand how much bycatch reduction can be reasonably expected by requiring the 5 row apron and 1.5:1 hanging ratio in the commercial fishery. To begin answering this question, Council staff reviewed the number of rows fished (in the apron) on observed trips from FY 2010 to FY 2017. The data suggests that vessels predominately fished 9 rows or longer prior to the 7-row requirement. Data on gear configurations fished in CAII between 2011 and 2014 show that vessels fished between 7 – 12 rows during that time period. Staff suggested that this issue should be considered because the PDT's analysis of bycatch reduction will likely utilize data from a time period when fishing more than 7-rows was permitted.

One member of the PDT suggested that hanging ratios should be examined in addition to the number of rows in the apron. Additional information overall scallop landings for statistical reporting areas in SNE, and the potential bycatch reduction from requiring a 5-row apron with a 1:1.5 hanging ratio in CAII was provided in Doc. #7 but not discussed due to lack of time. The PDT will continue to discuss flatfish AM development at its upcoming meetings.

NORTHERN GULF OF MAINE MANAGEMENT - TAC SPLIT CONSIDERATIONS

Council staff quickly walked through the NGOM TAC split considerations document (PDT document #8). The PDT is looking for direction from the Committee on this issue, and the document is intended to spark discussion and elicit input for the AP and Committee at their upcoming meetings. Following this overview, Mr. Ben Galuardi updated the PDT on the LA landings estimate from the NGOM management area in 2017. The estimate was calculated by the probability of LA effort occurring in the NGOM management area. To do this, a list of all vessels that reported through VMS within the NGOM in FY 2017 was constructed. Next, the first and last reporting times, and trip lengths, for each vessel were compared to landings that occurred during the time the NGOM was open. Next, steps were taken to determine trips that did not occur in the NGOM. Mr. Galuardi explained that there were many trips that began just before the NGOM closure, with vessels fishing in the NGOM and continuing on to fish other areas after the closure. It is not possible to accurately apportion these trips, but for the purposes of the estimate, all landings were attributed to the NGOM. The total LA NGOM landings estimate is likely an over-estimate (upper-bound).

The estimate of LA landings from the NGOM management area in 2017 is 1,578,020 lbs. The majority of these landings (~1.3 million lbs) came from LA full-time double dredge vessels (Cat. 2). Full and part time small dredge vessels accounted for the remaining LA harvest.

A member of the PDT noted that the revised landings estimates represent a large proportion of the estimate for Stellwagen Bank estimate from the 2016 survey. There was one suggestion to add additional text around the intent of A11 in the “considerations” section of the document.

Other Business:

No other business was discussed.

Figure 2 - Overview of scallop catch (numbers of animals) from four bottom trawl surveys with stations in the Gulf of Maine from 1963 - 2014.

