



## New England Fishery Management Council

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# MEETING SUMMARY

## Scallop PDT Meeting

June 27, 2019

Conference Call

The Scallop PDT met by conference call on June 27, 2019 to: 1) review Committee motions/tasking and discuss potential alternatives related to Framework 32, 2) review Committee motions/tasking and discuss potential alternatives related to Amendment 21, 3) receive an update on the Scallop RSA program review and 2020/2021 Scallop RSA Research Priorities, and 4) discuss other business.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Jonathon Peros (PDT Chair), Sam Asci, Dr. Naresh Pradhan, Dr. Rachel Feeney, Dr. David Rudders, Dr. Bill DuPaul, Dr. Dave Bethoney, Travis Ford, Ben Galuardi, Dr. Dvora Hart, Chad Keith, and Dr. Cate O’Keefe. Several members of the public also joined the call.

The call began at 10:01 am. Following roll call, Council staff briefly reviewed the agenda and provided the PDT with a list of upcoming meetings. It was noted that the Council removed “evaluation of rotational management” and added “harvest of small, slow-growing scallops in the NLS-S-deep” as a 2019 scallop work priority at their June meeting.

## Framework 32

**SAMS area modifications:** The PDT revisited discussion around potentially modifying SAMS areas.

*Key PDT discussion points and recommendations:*

- The PDT agreed that SAMS areas should be renamed to more accurately reflect current spatial management and to reduce confusion around which areas are accessible to the scallop fishery.
- The PDT discussed how to approach reconfiguring SAMS areas to better reflect the current distribution of the resource and spatial management configuration. A member of the PDT noted that the NEFSC is planning to restratify the NMFS dredge survey areas in the fall, and suggested waiting until after that effort is complete to reconfigure SAMS areas because the current SAMS boundaries are based on strata used in the dredge survey. The NEFSC is still planning the restratification effort, such as identifying the appropriate methods to use, the appropriate review process, and the overall timeline. The PDT agreed that reconfiguring SAMS areas should be done after the restratification efforts are complete.

- The PDT briefly discussed several SAMS areas that are not based on survey strata and are no longer relevant, such as the NLS-extension, ET-Flex/ET-Open, and SCH-HMA. The PDT agreed that the NLS-extension SAMS area should be reverted back to part of the SCH SAMS because the NLS-extension is no longer a relevant spatial management area. The PDT also agreed that the SCH-HMA should be removed because the GSC-HMA is a permanent closure and therefore is not necessary to include in the estimation model. It was agreed that the ET-Flex and ET-Open SAMS boundaries should be maintained as FW32 is developed to account for the distinct scallop populations of each area when projecting exploitable biomass for FY2020.
- Related to developing specifications for FY2020, Council staff noted that survey data will be due on August 15<sup>th</sup> in preparation for the two-day PDT meeting later in that month.

**Mitigating impacts to GB yellowtail:** The PDT received an update on Committee discussion/tasking related to mitigating impacts to GB yellowtail flounder. The PDT was tasked to explore options for a seasonal closure in CAII and CAII-extension between August 1 and December 31 in two week increments.

*Key points from PDT discussion:*

- The PDT discussed the Committee tasking statement, and clarified that the seasonal closure alternatives would be expected to run concurrently with the existing closure in CAII (i.e. August 15-November 15).
- Members of the PDT noted that recent surveys suggest a large set of adult scallops in CAII that will likely be ready for harvest in FY2020 as well as a pulse of juvenile yellowtail.
- A member of the PDT felt that the Council should reconsider the level of GB yellowtail allocated to the scallop fishery in years that the scallop fishery has access to CAII.
- A member of the PDT noted that the Committee tasking motion considered both yellowtail and windowpane flounder, and suggested that alternatives to reduce bycatch should be focused on yellowtail because this reflects the 2019 work priority.

**Harvest of the small, slow-growing scallops in the NLS-S-deep:** Council staff reminded the PDT that harvesting the small slow-growing scallops in the NLS-S-deep was prioritized by the Council and alternatives will be developed in FW32.

*Key points from PDT discussion:*

- A member of the PDT felt strongly that shell stocking and changing the minimum ring size requirement should not be considered when developing harvest options in the NLS-S-deep. They suggested using traditional gear and allowing more crew members to help with processing the small scallops at-sea.
- The PDT discussed the potential for using an area TAC to administering access to the NLS-S-deep (i.e. the area can be fished until a prespecified level of pounds or trips are reached, and the area closes).
- The PDT agreed that a simple approach (such as exempting crew size or developing an area TAC) is preferred at this time over other, more complicated ideas that have been discussed in the past (like shucking machines and shell stocking). GARFO staff will provide the PDT with a list of reasonable options that could be developed in FW32 vs. options that would be more difficult to accomplish in a timely manner.

## Amendment 21—NGOM Management:

The PDT reviewed Committee motions related to developing alternatives for NGOM management measures.

### *Key points from PDT discussion:*

- Regarding alternatives around the NGOM allocation split, it was suggested that the level of allocation to the LA and LAGC components will be dependent on where in the NGOM the fishing is expected to take place. For example, some organizations may resist allocating a full access area trip to the LA component to Stellwagen Bank because of the habitat characteristics in this area and risk of moving and/or damaging shipwrecks. It was further suggested that gear restrictions (e.g. 10.5' dredge) could be considered to offset negative impacts to these types of areas in the NGOM when considering allocations.
- The PDT discussed ways to reduce the derby-style fishery and lengthening the NGOM season, including allowing one sailing per day, weekly landing limits, and delaying the start of season. A member of the PDT noted that reducing a derby fishery and lengthening the fishing season are two different objectives, and suggested that the Committee be asked to clarify this in the future. It was also noted that objectives can dictate what considerations are made when developing alternatives (i.e. biological, economic, social, etc.).
- GARFO staff suggested that developing a mechanism to close the NGOM in a more accurate and timely manner may be worth considering. Due to the lag in dealer data, GARFO monitors removals from the NGOM by the number of trips taken as opposed to pounds landed (despite the TAC being measured in lbs). By transitioning the TAC to numbers of trips (i.e. TAC lbs/possession limit) instead of lbs, it may be possible to close the NGOM as soon as the last trip is declared. Other PDT members voiced support for pursuing this idea.
- The PDT suggested reviewing available fishery data to better inform derby-style fishing behavior in recent years (i.e. number of active vessels, number of trips per vessel, NGOM effort over the course of the season, etc.).
- The PDT agreed that a monitoring program should be developed in the NGOM because tracking bycatch is important, and generally agreed that an electronic monitoring program would be worth exploring based on NGOM vessels typically having limited size capacity (i.e. difficult to fit a human observer on board). It was also suggested that some coverage be from human observers so that more comprehensive biological data can be collected that cameras are not able to obtain.
- The PDT discussed developing a RSA program in the NGOM and acknowledged the scale of the NGOM fishery is small relative to the scallop research set-aside (1.25 million lbs). One suggestion for ensuring that the NGOM “has some skin in the game” is requiring that compensation pounds allocated to NGOM research (i.e. currently the LA share of the NGOM TAC) are harvested in the NGOM (i.e. currently, LA vessels have the option to harvest compensation pounds from the NGOM or elsewhere in the resource). Overall, the PDT felt that reviewing input from the RSA Program Review would help guide development of an

RSA in the NGOM. The PDT also noted that the administrative burden of creating a separate RSA for the NGOM management unit should be considered.

- Regarding alternatives for a GRA in the NGOM and GOM Dredge Exemption area, Council staff have reached out to Michelle Bachman about fishing intensity modelling analysis, and suggested this be a good starting point to inform gear restriction alternatives.
- Regarding an alternative that would remove the requirement for state licensed scallops with IFQ permits to use their IFQ when fishing in state waters of the NGOM during the state season, the PDT has reservations due to potential 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, New Hampshire, and Maine). GARFO staff noted that a state water exemption must be established in an amendment, but was unsure if this issue fits within the scope of A21. Other discussion highlighted that an alternative like this could potentially trigger a reallocation if there are significant IFQ landings in state waters fisheries outside of the NGOM.

## Update on RSA program review and 2020/2021 RSA priorities

Council staff updated the PDT on the final 2020/2021 Scallop RSA priorities selected by the Council at their June meeting as well as the Council discussion around the RSA Program Review recommendations.

### *Key points from PDT discussion:*

- It was noted that there were questions on the legality of several of the RSA Program review recommendations, particularly those related to cooperative agreements—a member of the PDT inquired as to when NOAA GC will have an opportunity to weigh-in.
- It was suggested that, if the cooperative agreement recommendation were to be pursued, the Council could consider a separate survey set-aside to separate the cooperative agreement component away from a competitive research program.

**Other Business:** No other business was discussed. The meeting concluded at 12:27 PM.