



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

Joint Scallop Plan Development Team and Advisory Panel Meeting

Hilton Garden Inn – Boston, MA

May 4, 2016

The Scallop PDT and AP met on May 4, 2016 in Boston, MA to: 1) review preliminary results from recent Scallop RSA projects, 2) discuss potential recommendations for future scallop research set-aside (RSA) priorities, and 3) a preliminary discussion of potential modifications to Georges Bank access areas based on preferred alternatives in the Essential Fish Habitat Omnibus Amendment 2.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

PDT Members – Ms. Deirdre Boelke (Co-Chair), Mr. Jonathon Peros (Co-Chair), Lt. Josh Boyle, Dr. Bill DuPaul, Mr. Travis Ford, Ms. Emily Gilbert, Mr. Ben Galuardi, Ms. Emily Keiley, Dr. Dvora Hart, Dr. Catherine O’Keefe, Dr. David Rudders.

AP Members – Mr. Peter Hughes (Chair); Mr. James Gutowski (Vice Chair); Mr. Ron Enoksen, Mr. James Fletcher, Mr. Kirk Larson, Mr. Paul Parker, Mr. Eric Hansen, Mr. Robert Maxwell, Mr. Charles Quinn, and Mr. Edward Welch.

In addition, approximately 15 members of the public attended including RSA presenters and Ms. Mary Beth Tooley, the Scallop Committee Chair.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

1. Summary of RSA Awards 2010 – 2016
2. Announcement of 2016/2017 RSA Awards (Dated April 7, 2016)
3. 2016/2017 Scallop RSA Federal Funding Announcement
4. Background document on potential modifications to Georges Bank access areas

KEY OUTCOMES:

- The PDT and AP provided initial input directly to RSA recipients about future research.
- The PDT and AP discussed recommendations for future research priorities.
- The PDT and AP began discussions on potential modifications to Georges Bank access areas based on the preferred alternatives in EFH Omnibus Amendment 2.

The meeting began at 9:05am.

AGENDA ITEM #1: OVERVIEW OF RSA PROGRAM AND RECENT AWARDS

PRESENTATION: MR. JONATHAN PEROS, NEFMC STAFF

The scallop research set-aside (RSA) program began in 1999. Currently 1.25 million pounds of scallops are set aside annually through scallop specifications to fund the program. For the 2016/2017 grant cycle, a \$12 dollar/lb price estimate was used by NMFS to convert pounds to dollars. A total of fifteen projects were funded – six of which were two year awards. Staff explained that the Council recommends RSA research priorities on at least a biannual basis, and will be discussing them at their June 2016 meeting. Staff also explained the RSA proposal and review processes (Document #3). A complete list of RSA recipients for 2010 – 2016 by year, research priority, and lead institution is contained in Document #1. The vast majority of RSA proposal results have either been used in Council actions or results have been shared with the Council. A suggestion was made to provide opportunities for RSA researchers to present at PDT meetings if they cannot attend future RSA share days.

AGENDA ITEM #2: REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY RESEARCH RESULTS FROM RSA AWARDS

Eight individual presentations were given on preliminary Scallop RSA research results. The list below includes the RSA award year, project title, presenter name, and lead institution. In general, these presentations helped the PDT and AP identify how to adjust future research priorities based on the status of these projects. All presentations are available on the Council website with these meeting materials. [Presentations will be made available to the public at this link on the Council's website.](#)

Sea turtle related research			
RSA Award Year	Project Title	PI / Presenter	Organization
2015	Understanding Impacts of the sea scallop fishery on loggerhead sea turtles	Samir Patel	CFF
2009-2013	Temperature observations from turtle-borne sensors to improve ocean models	Jim Manning	NOAA
2015	Update on the nematode parasite in sea scallops (<i>Sulcascaris sulcata</i>)	David Rudders	VIMS
Scallop Biology and gear research			
2013	Identifying source sink dynamics in sea scallop populations of the Northwest Atlantic	Steve Vollmer	Northeastern
2013	Survey of persistent scallop aggregations and an examination of their influence on recruitment using the FVCOM oceanographic model	Changsheng Chen	SMAST

2015	Determination of the impacts of dredge speed on bycatch reduction and scallop selectivity	Farrell Davis	CFF
Incidental Mortality of sea scallops			
2014	Incidental mortality estimates of sea scallops from AUV based BACI surveys	Danielle Ferraro	U Delaware, VIMS
2014	Determining Incidental discard mortality of Atlantic Sea scallops	Elenor Bochenek and Jason Morson	NFI and Rutgers

AGENDA ITEM #3: INITIAL DISCUSSION OF FUTURE RESEARCH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff reviewed the 2016/2017 RSA priorities, focusing on the language describing each priority in the RSA FFO (Document #3). The group noted that six projects had received funding for two years, including surveys of the Mid-Atlantic, and Nantucket Lightship and surrounds. Around 400,000 lbs of 2017/2018 RSA set-aside will be used to cover the cost of these six projects.

Several potential modifications to the RSA priorities were identified. The AP and Committee will consider these revisions at upcoming meetings in June. Suggested PDT/AP changes to the RSA process and priorities will be reflected in an updated red-line version of the 2016/2017 RSA FFO. The group requested that staff identify topics of projects that received two year funding, particularly survey work. It was noted that the 2017 RSA cycle will solicit projects for 2017/2018. Several members of the PDT and AP expressed interest in adding impacts of density dependence and keeping disease/parasite research as a highest priority under the umbrella of area management research. Bycatch was recommended to remain as a highest priority, with the addition of gear research to reduce the impact on small scallops. The group recommended non-harvest mortality (including natural, incidental, and discard) as a medium priority. Turtle research was also recommended as a medium priority. The group briefly discussed adding vaccinations to the turtle priority for 2017. A new priority of research that investigates the factors affecting fishing power and estimates of how they relate to projections of landings per unit effort (LPUE) was recommended for other projects.

An AP member requested that staff work with the NEFSC to determine whether or not the names of vessels that receive compensation pounds each year can be released. Several people suggested that RSA research published in peer-review journals be open access. It was explained that journal articles can be made open access if the author(s) cover the cost. Members of the PDT noted that not all RSA research is published in peer-reviewed journals, and it may be difficult to make this a requirement of the program. There was general support that RSA research be available to the public.

AGENDA ITEM #4: DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE GEORGES BANK ACCESS AREAS BASED ON PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES IN EFH OMNIBUS AMENDMENT 2

Council staff provided an overview of the omnibus habitat process, explaining that the Council identified final recommendations for modifications to habitat management areas over two Council meetings, April 2015 and June 2015. Council staff sent a draft submission document to

GARFO on January 14, 2016, and suggested revisions have come back that need to be changed before the final draft is complete for the proposed rule. Staff expects to send the final submission document to GARFO in May. Measures have not been approved; a proposed rule is expected early summer 2016, and a final decision on the amendment will be available 90 days from publication of the amendment, so roughly late September. The final rule based on this decision should be published in December. Staff explained that the scallop fishery will not have immediate access to areas that may potentially open to other fisheries when the habitat rule publishes. Rather, the Council will need to develop measures to allow the scallop fishery to access previously closed areas through a framework.

The group's discussion on this topic was wide ranging. Multiple members of the AP voiced support for treating openings of new bottom as access areas for the first year, before determining whether or not the area should be open access or part of rotational area management. There was also support expressed for potentially smaller access area trips (~12,000lbs) to newly opened areas. Some AP members voiced that all areas on GB should not be included in access areas, and more area should be open for DAS fishing. The group discussed that there are unused trips in CAI still, and it may make sense to allocate those trips first into CAI if the boundary is extended north. One PDT member argued that part of the CAII north access area should remain closed, potentially along the Hague line to maintain an area to assess the impacts of fishing on habitat, but other speakers opposed this idea and argued that there will be a control area just to the south of the potential access area. Another PDT member suggested that some sort of experimental fishery may be necessary in CAII north if it opens. The quality of the scallops in that area is very uncertain and the plan may not want to allocate a large volume from that area. Council staff also explained that closures which were put in place through FW27 (notable CAII extension and NL) may be reopened through the anticipated framework action for 2016. These discussions will likely continue this year, particularly after survey results are available for the areas.

Other Business

Staff explained that the Council prioritized work on windowpane flounder management measures for 2016, and that a windowpane flounder discussion paper was presented to the Groundfish Committee at their April meeting. The Groundfish Committee has tasked the Groundfish PDT to examine approaches for developing a northern windowpane sub-ACL for the scallop fishery. Staff explained that the Groundfish PDT would be discussing options at their upcoming meeting on May 11th in Boston, MA, and that the Groundfish Committee would receive an update on the PDT's work at their meeting on June 9th. A member of the public asked if a joint Scallop/Groundfish AP meeting was being planned to discuss windowpane issues. Staff explained that the current process will be for the Groundfish PDT and Committee to meet before next steps are formalized.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.