



New England Fishery Management Council

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Council Proposes Catch Limits for Scallops and Some Groundfish Stocks

Newport, RI: The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) took several major actions at its [December](#) 2–4, 2025 meeting including setting Fishing Year (FY) 2026 scallop Days-at-Sea, approving U.S./Canada transboundary stock Total Allowable Catches (TACs), and approving Framework Adjustment 72 for groundfish.

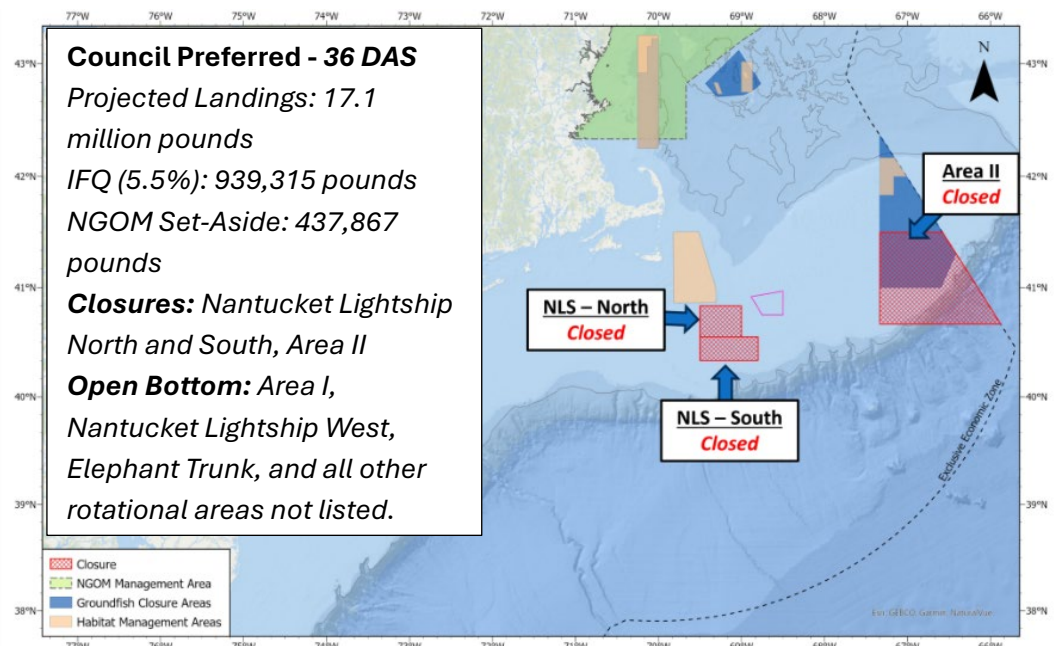
SCALLOPS: COUNCIL SETS 36 DAS, APPROVES NGOM MEASURES, AND ADOPTS STRATEGIC PLAN

The Council approved **Framework Adjustment 40** which sets 36 Days-at-Sea (DAS) for full-time Limited Access scallop vessels for FY 2026. The decision followed extensive debate on alternatives ranging from the Scallop Committee's recommendation of 34 DAS to the Advisory Panel's preferred option of 38 DAS.

Scientific analysis indicated low overfishing risk under all alternatives. The discussion included testimony from Massachusetts State Senator, Mark Montigny and numerous industry representatives.

The final action adopted:

- 36 Days-at-Sea for full-time Limited Access permit holders and 14.4 Days-at-Sea to part-time Limited Access permit holders. No access-area trips will be available this year.
- Closure of Area II (Closed Area II – South and Extension) and Nantucket Lightship (South and North).
- 60-day carryover period for FY 2025 access area trips to Area I would begin on April 1. Area I would not have a delayed opening from April 1, 2026 – May 15, 2026.



The Council advanced measures affecting the **Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM)**, which resulted in 482,753-lb. total allowable landings (TAL) and a 437,867-lb. NGOM set-aside for FY 2026. The change accounts for a decline in exploitable scallop biomass across the NGOM, including on Stellwagen Bank where the majority of fishing effort is expected to occur in FY 2026.

Finally, the Council unanimously approved the **Scallop Long-Term [Strategic Plan](#)**, a 3 to 5-year roadmap built from public input, research needs, and industry priorities. The plan, which is based on robust [public input](#) outlines nine objectives aimed at a sustainable, resilient, and profitable fishery and will guide new projects launching in 2026.

GROUNDFISH: FRAMEWORK 72 SUBMITTED, SSC REQUESTED TO REVIEW WHITE HAKE ACCEPTABLE BIOLOGICAL CATCH

The Council voted to submit **Framework Adjustment 72 to GARFO**. The FW includes three actions:

Action 1. Status Determination Criteria: The Council recommended establishing status determination criteria for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder based on the most recent assessment. Status determination criteria are required for all stocks in a fishery management plan and will be used to determine stock status and evaluate progress towards rebuilding this stock.

Action 2. Revised Specifications: The Council recommended revised groundfish specifications that set FY 2026 catch limits for Georges Bank cod, haddock, and yellowtail flounder, as well as multi-year specifications (FY 2026–2030) for several additional stocks including Cape Cod/ Gulf of Maine and Southern New England yellowtail flounder, Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern new England winter flounder, redfish, ocean pout, and Atlantic wolffish. The Council also removed the management uncertainty buffer for white hake sectors if the at-sea monitoring target coverage rate is 90% or greater for FY 2026-2030.

Action 3 – Recreational Fishery Management Measures: The Council established a process for the Regional Administrator, in consultation with the Council, to permanently adjust recreational fishing measures for all cod and haddock stocks. This adds cod and haddock stocks without a sub-ACL (including Eastern Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank cod, and Georges Bank haddock) to the existing regulatory process for the Regional Administrator to adjust recreational fishing measures for stocks with recreational sub-ACLs.

White Hake

The Council preliminarily approved the SSC's recommended OFLs and ABCs for white hake based on a fishing mortality at 70% of the fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (70% F_{MSY}) for FY 2026–2030, resulting in a U.S. ABC of 1,362 mt in FY 2026. Additionally, the Council requested that the SSC consider ABCs at 75% F_{MSY} for FY 2026-2030, which would increase the ABC by 95 mt in FY 2026. Any revised SSC recommendations will be automatically adopted into [Framework 72](#) without further

Council discussion. The SSC will meet on [January](#) 21, 2026, to consider this request. White hake is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, but the stock is in a rebuilding plan.

Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC): The Council approved the 2026 U.S./Canada transboundary stock Total Allowable Catches as recommended by the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee.

Transboundary Managed Stocks	2026 Metric Tons
Eastern Georges Bank cod	473
Eastern Georges Bank haddock	4,750
Georges Bank yellowtail flounder	57

WHITING / SMALL MESH

The Council received a presentation of the 2024 Annual Monitoring [Report](#) for the Small-Mesh Multispecies fishery. Additionally, the Council supported the Plan Development Team's recommendation to defer application of the **red hake post-season accountability measure** that would otherwise be applied to the TAL trigger and possession limits in FY 2026. A letter will be sent to GARFO to consider this request.

OTHER NEWS: WITH GOVERNMENT REOPEN, FRAMEWORK 69 AND AMENDMENT 25 ADVANCE

On December 8th, NMFS published a proposed rule which solicits comment on **Framework (FW) 69** through January 7, 2026. Measures in the Framework include:

- Eases reporting burdens for sectors
- Modifies the trigger for accountability measures in the scallop fishery
- Sets accountability measure for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder
- Sets specifications for several groundfish stocks through FY 2027
- Updates common pool possession and trip limits
- Sets U.S./Canada TACs for Georges Bank haddock for 2025, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder for 2025 and 2026.

The New England Fishery Management Council submitted a preliminary version of **Amendment 25** (revised) to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) on November 14, 2025. This collaborative effort is part of the Council's ongoing commitment to advancing groundfish management measures and ensuring timely implementation for the upcoming fishing year.