



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2017

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Scallops: New England Council Initiates Framework 29 to Address Northern Gulf of Maine, 2018-2019 Specs, Flatfish AMs

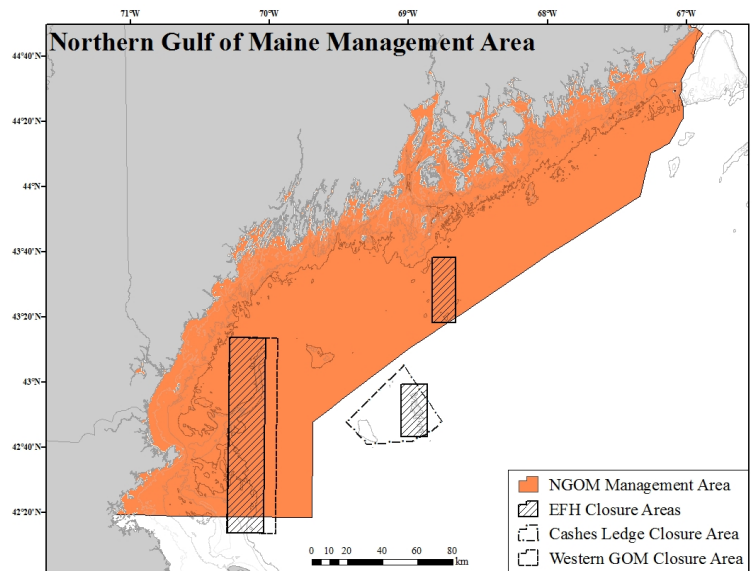
During its mid-April meeting in Mystic, CT, the New England Fishery Management Council initiated Framework Adjustment 29 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan. The framework will address four “2017 scallop management priorities” identified last fall. These include:

- Fishery specifications for the 2018 scallop fishing year and default specifications for 2019;
- Flatfish accountability measures for scallopers;
- Scallop access area modifications to be consistent with pending habitat area revisions; and
- Measures for the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area.

While specifications and AM adjustments are required to be in the framework, the following problem statement explains the reason for the NGOM measures:

“Recent high landings and unknown biomass in the Northern Gulf of Maine Scallop Management Area underscore the critical need to initiate surveys and develop additional tools to better manage the area and fully understand total removals.”

Framework 29 may consider limiting vessels from fishing in the NGOM until biomass is more accurately determined and management measures can ensure sustainable harvest for all permit categories. Furthermore:



- (1) The Council voted to send a letter to the Northeast Fisheries Science Center asking the center to explore including the area off Cape Ann and the northeastern section of Stellwagen Bank in upcoming 2017 scallop surveys. NGOM fishing effort was concentrated in those areas during fishing years 2016 and 2017. And
- (2) The Council will consider prioritizing the development of an amendment in 2018 to explore potential provisions related to sustainable harvest strategies, permit allocations, permit access, NGOM research set-aside allocations, and trip-level reporting. The Council will cast a final vote on 2018 priorities at its Dec. 5-7 meeting in Newport, RI.



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Atlantic sea scallops are managed as a single stock throughout the range of the resource in both federal and state waters from Cape Hatteras to the Canadian border. The vast majority of landings come from Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic, totaling 40 million to 50+ million pounds of scallop meats annually.

In recent years, except for a notable uptick in 2016, landings from the NGOM have been at or below the area's 70,000-pound total allowable catch (TAC). In 2017, however, over 100 vessels – 67 Limited Access (LA) and 38 LA General Category (LAGC) – fished in the NGOM area and landed more than 1 million pounds of scallops, according to preliminary estimates. This increase in effort and landings has led to renewed interest in revisiting how the NGOM area will be managed going forward.

The Gulf of Maine has not been surveyed on a regular basis, although periodic surveys have been done in the past through the industry-funded Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) conducted a dedicated NGOM dredge survey in 2016 comprised of 238 stations in seven areas from Cape Ann to Machias Seal Island. DMR survey results indicated that biomass had increased since 2012 when the area was last surveyed. The majority of the biomass was located in the southern portion of the management area. The Council now is seeking to have additional

NGOM surveys conducted either through expansion of the federal scallop survey or through additional RSA surveys. The goal is to generate biomass estimates in 2017 to guide management and ensure sustainable harvest.

Specifications, Flatfish AMs

In addition to NGOM measures, Framework 29 will cover:

- **Specifications** for fishing year 2018, which begins April 1, 2018, and default specifications for 2019, including acceptable biological catch (ABC), annual catch limits (ACLs), days-at-sea (DAS) allocations, access area allocations for LA and LAGC vessels, a hard TAC for the NGOM area, a target TAC to account for LAGC incidental catch, and RSA and observer set-asides;
- **Flatfish AMs** for three stocks – Georges Bank and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder and Georges Bank windowpane flounder;
- **Closed Area I Scallop Access Area** modifications due to pending habitat area revisions.



Haul from the 2016 Maine DMR/UMaine NGOM scallop survey. – Michael Kersula, DMR photo

Scallop documents are available on the Council website at:

- <http://www.nefmc.org/calendar/april-2017-council-meeting>
- <http://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/scallops>

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