



New England Fishery Management Council

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Scallops: Council Signs Off on Framework 33 with Fishing Year 2021 Allocations and 2022 Defaults

The New England Fishery Management Council has selected final measures for Framework Adjustment 33 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan and voted to send the framework to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries) for review and implementation.

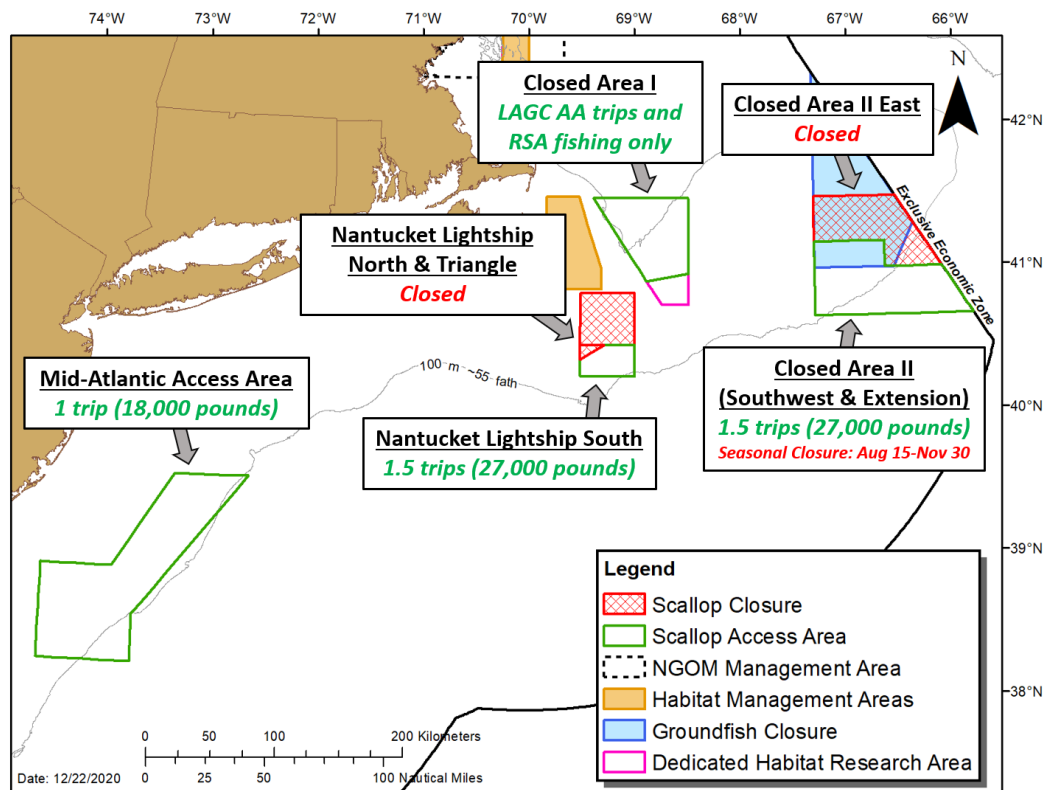
The framework includes: (1) specifications for the 2021 scallop fishing year; (2) default specifications for the 2022 fishing year; and (3) measures to minimize impacts on Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and northern windowpane flounder.

For 2021, **full-time** limited access vessels will be allocated:

- 1 trip to the Mid-Atlantic Access Area;
- 1.5 trips to Nantucket Lightship North & Triangle;
- 1.5 trips to Closed Area II (Southwest and Extension) with a seasonal closure from August 15 through November 30 to reduce flatfish impacts; and
- 24 open area days-at-sea.

The possession limit will be 18,000 pounds per trip, and vessels will be allowed to exchange allocations in all areas in 9,000-pound increments.

– NEMFC graphic at right



*Above, 2021 fishing year access area allocations for full-time limited access scallop vessels. **CLOSED AREA I** will be available **only** for (1) limited access general category (LAGC) access area trips; and (2) compensation fishing under the Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. A seasonal closure will be in place in Closed Area II (Southwest and Extension) from August 15 through November 30 to reduce impacts on flatfish. Two extra crewmen will be allowed on trips in Nantucket Lightship South, raising the crew limit in this area to 10 for full-time vessels and eight for part-time vessels.*



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For 2021, **part-time** limited access vessels will be allocated:

- 1 trip to the Mid-Atlantic Access Area at 14,400 pounds;
- 1 trip either to Nantucket Lightship South or Closed Area II (Southwest and Extension) at 14,400 pounds; and
- 9.6 open area days-at-sea.

Default Measures for 2022: The Council will develop updated specifications for the 2022 fishing year. However, Framework 33 contains 2022 default measures in case implementation of new specifications is delayed. Defaults for 2022 include:

- 18 open area days-at-sea for full-time vessels and 7.2 open area days for part-time vessels beginning April 1, 2022; and
- One 18,000-pound trip to the Mid-Atlantic Access Area for full-time vessels and one 7,200-pound trip to the Mid-Atlantic Access Area for part-time vessels beginning May 1, 2022.

LAGC IFQ Vessels: The limited access general category individual fishing quota (LAGC IFQ) component of the scallop fishery is collectively allocated 5.5% of annual projected landings, and then each vessel receives an individual quota based on its fishing history. The LAGC component also is allocated a fleet-wide number of access area trips proportional to 5.5% of the access area harvest expected for the full-time limited access fleet. LAGC vessels can elect to fish their quota either in open areas or in access areas where trips are available.

As part of Framework 33, the Council voted to distribute LAGC IFQ trips from Closed Area II, which is offshore on eastern Georges Bank, to Closed Area I, which is more inshore (see page 1 map).

LAGC vessels tend to be smaller in size, and the long steam to Georges Bank poses potential safety concerns, which the Council considered.

Under Framework 33, projected landings for fishing year 2021 are estimated to be approximately 40 million pounds valued at roughly \$387 million.



The UMass Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) conducted a 2020 drop camera survey in the Gulf of Maine under the Scallop RSA Program. An image from this survey is shown above. – SMAST photo



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Here are the LAGC IFQ 2021 access area allocations:

- 571 trips in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area;
- 856 trips in Nantucket Lightship South; and
- 856 trips in Closed Area I (this area is for LAGC and RSA fishing only).



➤ All documents used during the Council’s January 27th scallop discussion are available [here](#).

– Coonamessett Farm Foundation photo

RSA Compensation Fishing: The Council agreed to allow fishing under the Scallop Research Set-Aside Program to take place in open areas, all rotational access areas, including Closed Area I, and, to a certain extent, in the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area. Compensation fishing in Closed Area II (Southwest and Extension) is restricted to June 1 to August 15, the time of year when flatfish bycatch is lowest on eastern Georges Bank.

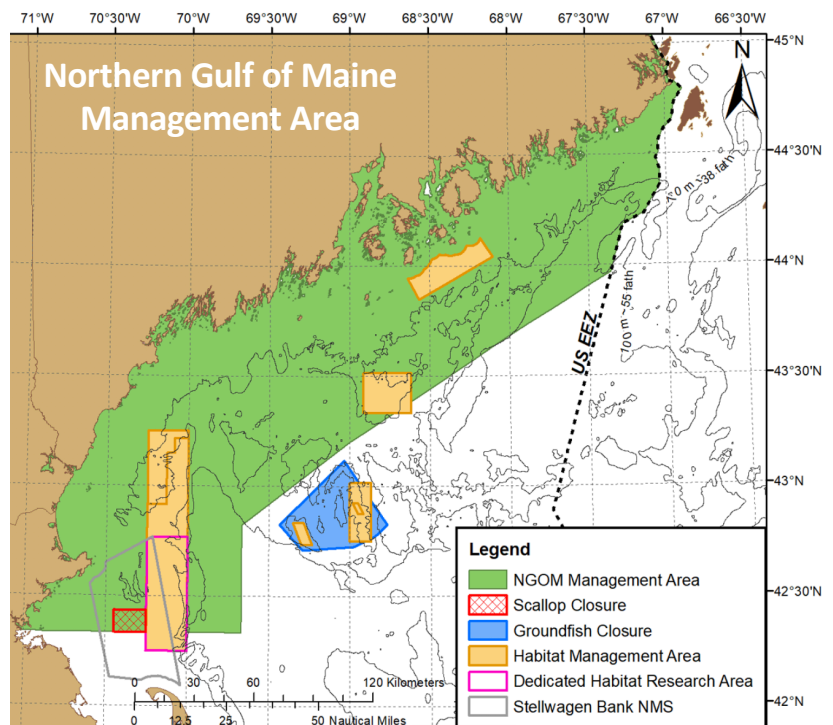
Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area

The Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area is subject to a total allowable catch (TAC) that’s allocated based on a sharing approach among the various components of the fishery. This approach was used for Framework Adjustments 29, 30, and 32 and is being used again for Framework 33.

For the 2021 fishing year, the TAC for the NGOM Management Area will be set at 175,000 pounds with the first 70,000 pounds going to the LAGC fishery and the remaining poundage being split 50/50 between the limited access component of the fishery and the LAGC component. This means the LAGC fishery, which includes LAGC IFQ vessels and vessels that hold NGOM-only permits, will be able to harvest 122,500 pounds of the 175,000-pound TAC from the area. NGOM-only vessels are subject to a 200-pound trip limit per day. The limited access fishery poundage will be available for RSA fishing only.

Harvestable-size scallops in the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area are located primarily in Ipswich Bay, on Jeffreys Ledge and Platts Bank, and around Machias Seal Island. A scallop closure on Stellwagen Bank (see red hatched box on map at right) currently harbors concentrations of small scallops. This area will remain closed during fishing year 2021, but the area is expected to reopen in the future when scallops there will be of harvestable size.

– NEFMC graphic at right





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Important Update About the Start of the 2021 Scallop Fishing Year

The scallop industry is operating right now under the 2020 fishing year. The 2021 fishing year will begin on April 1, 2021. However, Framework Adjustment 33 will **not** be implemented by April 1. As such, fishermen will be working under default 2021 measures that were established in Framework 32 as a backup.

The Council has been aware for several months that implementation of Framework 33 would be delayed. Complications due to COVID-19 led to the cancellation of the federal scallop survey. Several other surveys were [successfully conducted](#) by industry and research partners through the Scallop RSA Program, but some of these surveys took place later in the summer than usual as captains, crews, and researchers addressed coronavirus safety guidelines and instituted necessary precautions. Once the surveys were completed, the resulting data still needed to be analyzed, which delayed action on Framework Adjustment 33.

Here are the default measures that scallopers will be working under beginning April 1, 2021 until Framework 33 is implemented in May or early June.

- **Full-time limited access vessels:** One 18,000-pound trip to the Mid-Atlantic Access Area (MAAA) and 18 open area days-at-sea;
- **Part-time limited access vessels:** One 7,200-pound trip to the MAAA and 7.2 open area days;
- **LAGC IFQ vessels:** 75% of the quota allocated for the 2020 fishing year and 571 trips to the MAAA; and
- **Northern Gulf of Maine:** The total allowable catch (TAC) for the NGOM under the default is 265,000 pounds. This is **higher** than the 175,000-pound TAC that will be implemented under Framework 33. Any catch above 175,000 pounds would result in a future pound-for-pound payback. The Council will look at updated survey data next year and review the status of the Stellwagen Bank scallop closure. This area is expected to contribute to NGOM landings down the road.



Scallops harvested on a RSA trip in Nantucket Lightship South. – VIMS photo

QUICK FACT: Recent scallop landings have been bolstered by exceptionally strong year classes in 2012 and 2013. The majority of scallops from the 2013 year class in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area have been harvested, but the remaining biomass can still support an access area trip in 2021 and, potentially, another in 2022. The bulk of the fishing effort is beginning to transition from the Mid-Atlantic to Georges Bank, where scallop biomass is increasing.

Questions? Contact Scallop Plan Coordinator Jonathon Peros at (978) 465-0492 ext. 117, email jperos@nefmc.org.