



New England Fishery Management Council

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Scallops: Council Reviews Amendment 21 Scoping Comments; Initiates Framework 32; Approves 2020-2021 RSA Priorities

During its June meeting in So. Portland, ME, the New England Fishery Management Council made several decisions related to the Atlantic sea scallop fishery.

- **Amendment 21:** The Council reviewed summaries of both oral and written comments gathered during the public scoping process for Amendment 21 to the Atlantic Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Council then cast several votes to help guide further work on the amendment.
- **Framework Adjustment 32:** The Council is working on this action to develop: (1) specifications for the 2020 scallop fishing year; (2) default specifications for 2021; (3) measures to reduce impacts on Georges Bank yellowtail flounder; and (4) options to utilize the dense biomass of small scallops in the Nantucket Lightship South “Deep” Area.
- **Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program:** The Council approved research priorities for the 2020-2021 scallop RSA award cycle.



Scallops on the auction floor, Buyers and Sellers Exchange (BASE), New Bedford. – NEFMC photo

- 188 individuals attended Amendment 21 meetings
- 57 people provided oral comments
- 26 people signed on to 24 written comments
- Visit the Amendment 21 [webpage](#)

Amendment 21 – Next Steps

The Council held 10 [scoping meetings](#) this winter and early spring to gather public input on the development of Amendment 21. At this June meeting, the Council received an extensive overview of the feedback gathered at both the in-person meetings and through correspondence during the scoping period. Highlights can be found in the [Council meeting presentation](#).

Amendment 21 is being developed to address three issues:

- (1) Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area measures;
- (2) The limited access general category (LAGC) possession limit; and
- (3) The ability for limited access (LA) vessels with individual fishing quota (IFQ) to transfer quota to LAGC IFQ-only vessels.



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VISION STATEMENT: The backbone of the management program for Limited Access General Category vessels was created through [Amendment 11](#). This amendment contains a vision statement, which describes the LAGC component of the fishery as:

“... a fleet made up of relatively small vessels, with possession limits to maintain the historical character of this fleet and provide opportunities to various participants, including vessels from smaller communities.”

The Council voted to reaffirm this vision statement for Amendment 21.

The Council also approved the following Amendment 21 objectives for management of the Northern Gulf of Maine:

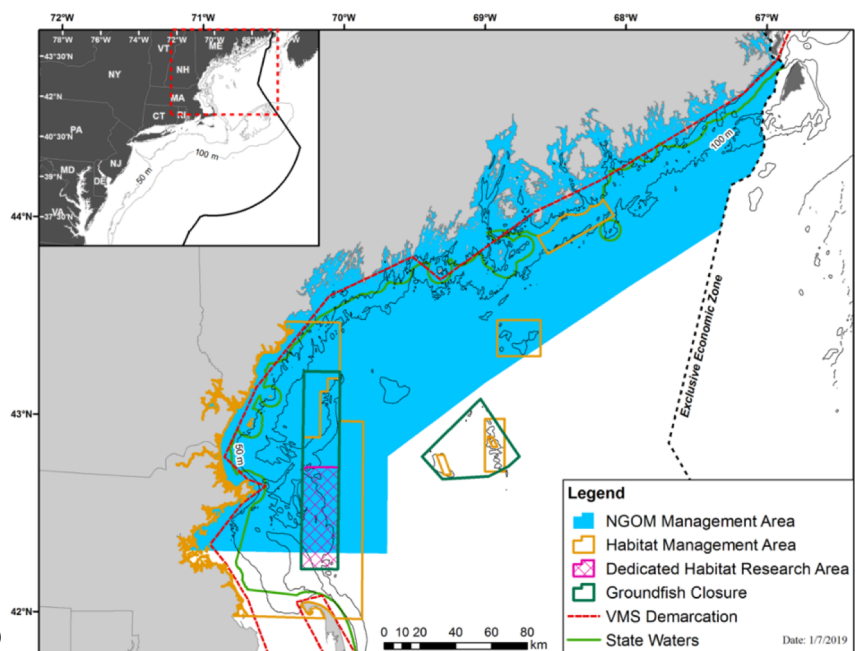
- Support a growing directed scallop fishery in federal waters in the Northern Gulf of Maine;
- Allow for orderly access to the scallop resource in this area by the LAGC and LA components; and
- Establish mechanisms to set allowable catch and accurately monitor catch and bycatch from the NGOM.

In addition, the Council voted to develop an alternative within the amendment that would remove the requirement for state-licensed scallopers with IFQ permits to use their IFQ when fishing in state waters that overlap with the Northern Gulf of Maine Area.

At present, IFQ vessels are required to use quota when operating in state waters fisheries because scallop landings from both state and federal waters were considered during the original LAGC IFQ qualification period in Amendment 11.

Several Council members expressed concerns about moving in this direction, but the Council collectively agreed to request further analyses to better weigh the pros and cons.

The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) will continue working on Amendment 21 over the summer. During its May meeting, the Scallop Committee tasked the PDT with analyzing the following issues for further consideration at its next meeting.



Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area.

– New England Fishery Management Council graphic



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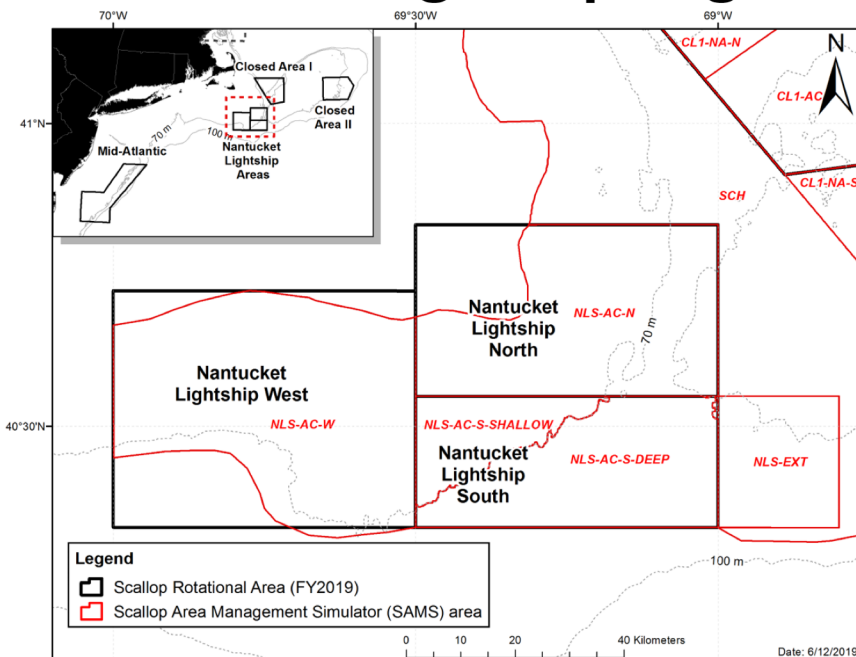
For the **Northern Gulf of Maine** component of Amendment 21, the PDT will develop alternatives that:

- Consider allocations to the limited access and LAGC components of the fishery under a range of biomass levels;
- Minimize the current derby-style fishery and lengthen the season;
- Facilitate reliable monitoring and reporting of catch and bycatch;
- Consider a Research Set-Aside Program for the Northern Gulf of Maine;
- Establish a gear restricted area (GRA) with a 10.5' dredge requirement in the NGOM; and
- Remove the requirement for state-licensed IFQ vessels to use IFQ when fishing in state fisheries in the NGOM as described on the previous page.

For the **Individual Fishing Quota** portion of Amendment 21, the PDT will develop alternatives that:

- Increase the IFQ trip limit in all areas with 800-pound, 1,000-pound, and 1,200-pound options;
- Increase the IFQ trip limit in access areas only; and
- Allow for the permanent and/or temporary transfer of quota from limited access vessels with IFQ to LAGC IFQ vessels.

Nantucket Lightship Region



The deep-water portion of Nantucket Lightship South harbors a large biomass of small, slow growing scallops. Framework 32 will include alternatives to allow harvesting of that resource. MAP ABOVE: The Nantucket Lightship Extension area is now open bottom but is still assessed as its own SAMS area. AC = access. NA = no access. CL1 = Closed Area I. – New England Council graphic

Amendment 21 Timing

This fall or early winter, the Council will select the full range of alternatives that will go out to public hearing. Hearings likely will be held during the summer of 2020. The target implementation date is April 2021.

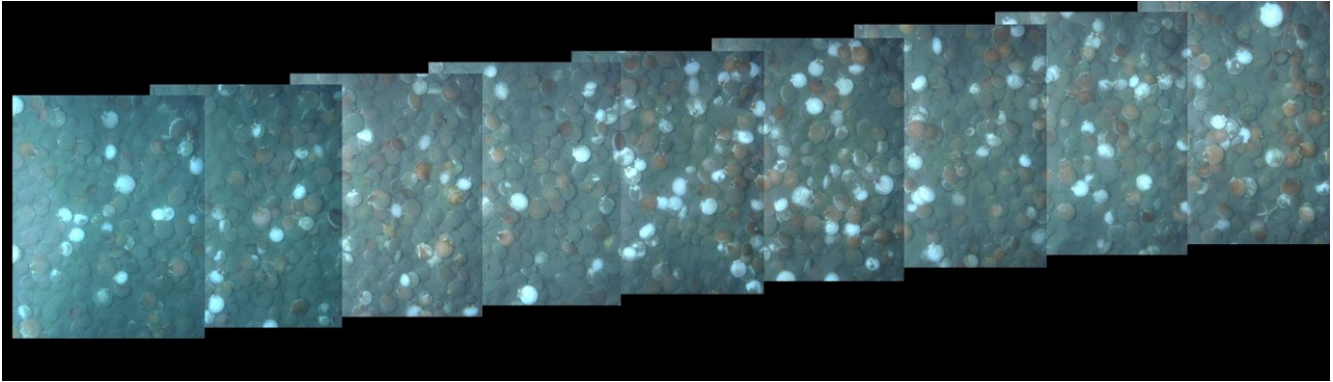
Framework Adjustment 32

In addition to the original elements of Framework 32 – the 2020 fishing year specifications, 2021 default specifications, and measures to reduce impacts on Georges Bank yellowtail flounder – the Council agreed to add an additional item to explore options for harvesting the large biomass of small scallops in the deep-water portion of the Nantucket Lightship South Area (see map at left).



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Resource surveys began documenting the dense concentrations of small scallops in the deep water of Nantucket Lightship South in 2014. However, these scallops, which are from the 2012 year class, have not been growing at normal growth rates. In fact, they exhibited virtually no growth at all between 2017 and 2018, possibly due to environmental factors or density dependence.



Images in the above mosaic show scallops in the deep-water portion of Nantucket Lightship South. The footage was captured in 2014 by a towed Habitat Mapping Camera System (HabCam). – Richard Taylor/HabCam photo

In 2018, roughly 76 million pounds of meats were estimated to be available in this deep water. Meat counts in July and October, however, were in 50-to-60 count range.

But the scallops went through a growth spurt in early 2019 and meat counts improved. This May, the average was more on the order of 45 count. Although the scallops have thin shells, the meat quality is considered “good” to “excellent.”

Scallops in this size range are not easily harvestable with 4” rings – the current requirement for scallop dredges – but fishermen expressed strong interest in exploring alternatives to catch these smaller scallops, which are aging and may not be contributing to spawning activity in a measurable way.

The Council agreed to add this item to Framework 32 in exchange for delaying a different priority – conducting an evaluation of the rotational management program.

Yellowtail Flounder

Framework 32 also will include measures to mitigate bycatch of Georges Bank yellowtail flounder. The Council identified this issue as a 2019 priority for scallops because the Closed Area II Scallop Access Area likely will be able to support fishing activity in 2020.

Bycatch of Georges Bank yellowtail flounder does occur in Closed Area II and is higher during certain months than others, especially in the fall. Bycatch is highest in the area known as Closed Area II Extension.



Yellowtail flounder on deck. – NEFMC photo



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Reducing bycatch is important because the scallop fishery is subject to a catch limit for Georges Bank yellowtail. At the direction of the Scallop Committee, the PDT is analyzing options that include seasonal closures and/or gear modifications that involve changes to dredge hanging ratios.

Research Set-Aside Priorities

Finally, the Council approved 2020-2021 priorities for the Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program.

Although the Scallop Committee had voted to weigh all priorities equally, the Council, after considerable discussion, voted to identify resource

2020-2021 Scallop RSA Priorities At-A-Glance			
1a	Intensive Surveys of Access Areas	4	Sea Turtles: Response to Climate Change
1b	Intensive Surveys of Areas of Interest	5	Bycatch: Small Scallops and Non-Target Species
1c	Broadscale Surveys of Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic	6	Scallop Meat Quality Research
2	Variability in Survey Dredge Efficiency	7	Research on Scallop Biology
3	Impact of Offshore Wind Development	8	Gulf of Maine Survey Optimization, Data Collection

surveys as its top priority. Survey work has been the Council’s top priority for several years running. The Council did not rank the remaining priorities – numbered 2 through 8 in the table above – saying they all carried equal weight. Additional details about the priorities will be presented this summer once the 2020-2021 Federal Funding Opportunity announcement is released to solicit project proposals.

2019 Pectinid Workshop

Jonathon Peros, the New England Council’s scallop plan coordinator and chair of the Scallop Plan Develop Team, and Council Fishery Analyst Sam Ascj, who also works on scallops, attended the [22nd International Pectinid Workshop](#) in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain in late April. Both gave presentations during the workshop.

- Jonathon’s presentation, titled “What’s at the end of the rainbow? Management implications of an extraordinary recruitment event,” is available [here](#).
- Sam’s presentation, titled “Adapting science-based management: recent evolution of rotational management in the Atlantic sea scallop fishery,” is available [here](#).



A scallop shell-shaped street marker, embedded in granite, showing the way to Camino de Santiago, the end point for all Camino pilgrimage routes in Spain.

– NEFMC photo

All meeting materials used for the Council’s June 2019 scallop discussion are available at [Scallop Report](#). Questions? Contact Jonathon Peros at (978) 465-0492 ext. 117, jperos@nefmc.org