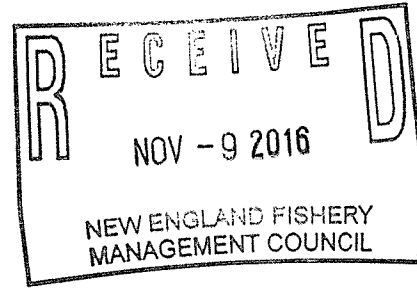


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ADDITIONAL
CORRESPONDENCE



MAINE COAST
FISHERMEN'S
ASSOCIATION



November 9, 2016

John Quinn
Chair, New England Fishery Management Council
50 water street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Chairman Quinn:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association in regards to the **scallop priorities for 2017** and **setting the total allowable catch of scallops for the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area for FY 2017**.

The Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA) is an industry-based non-profit which identifies and fosters ways to restore the fisheries of the Gulf of Maine and sustain Maine's historic fishing communities for future generations. Established and run by Maine fishermen, the objectives of the Association are to: provide a voice for our fishing communities; rebuild the Gulf of Maine ecosystem; and help build viable fishing businesses on our coast. As such, we are extremely interested in building a robust and sustainable scallop fishery in the Gulf of Maine and hope that the Council will continue to work with us towards that end.

For the first time in almost two decades, scallops are rebuilding in the Gulf of Maine. This is not surprising considering the work that has been done in establishing a strong state waters population and the warming waters within the Gulf, unfortunately we are not prepared to truly benefit from the return of this valuable stock. Last year harvest of scallops *far* exceeded the recommended catch of 70,000lbs from within the GOM. The small-boat fleet caught nearly 87,000lbs (between NGOM permits and gen cat permits) and the limited access boats landed at least 230,000lbs. The presence of so many scallops is obviously a good thing, but our inability to properly control the catch of this important species, especially as it is rebuilding, is very worrying. The only way to regulate the Gulf of Maine to scallop fishery at this time is to have the NGOM and gen cat boats hit their limit which closes the area to all fishing. This is no way to manage a fishery and as such we are requesting that **NGOM Issues be prioritized to be addressed in 2017**.

In the short term, we still must address the catch of scallops for 2017. **Our membership supports the PDT proposed limit of 95,000lbs for the 2017 TAC**. This is the middle proposed limit which will ensure that Maine's small boat fleet receives some benefit from that growth while also being able to limit excess landings. With the groundfish fishery and shrimp fishery being very difficult for fishermen in Maine to make money off of, having any type of additional income is extremely important for our small-boat fleet. While we recognize that the TAC could be as high as 500,000lbs, the PDT stated that that should represent *all take* from the area which is impossible to control



currently. Increasing the NGOM TAC too much prior to correcting dangerous management inconsistencies will allow limited access vessels an even longer period of unrestricted fishing in this unique and vulnerable area. This could put the rebuilding of this fishery at risk for another 20 years which we cannot afford. Instead, **we hope that you will support the 95,000lb TAC.**

Thank you for your support and attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Ben Martens
Executive Director





New England Fisheries Management Council
John Quinn, Chair
Tom Nies, Executive Director
November 8, 2016

Dear John, Tom and members of the Council:

I am writing to ask you to ensure Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) scallop management corrections are included on the final priorities list. In addition, I am asking you to approve a NGOM TAC of 95,000 pounds.

This year, Limited Access vessels removed roughly 300,000 pounds of scallops from the NGOM, an area *supposedly protected by a 70,000 pound TAC*. Merely extending the deck loading provision into the NGOM will not solve the problem. In April the state of MA began enforcing a regulation prohibiting possession of more than 50 bushels of shell stock in state waters (which roughly follow the demarcation line), and LA vessels remained in the NGOM until the last day of fishing (May 13). The only people suggesting this will solve the problem are those who like the status quo, and the status quo is not responsible management.

Correspondence for this meeting (included under scallops) includes a number of letters from NGOM fishermen and other stakeholders urging you to prioritize NGOM management fixes. I will not rehash their points. I will merely state that when the Council and NOAA Fisheries established the NGOM as a distinct management area, they took on the responsibility of preventing overfishing in that area. It's time to do that.

I also ask you to support a NGOM TAC of 95,000 pounds, which is the figure arrived at by consensus by the majority of NGOM fishermen I work with (note the letter in your correspondence signed by 17 of them). Although many of these fishermen worry how many total pounds will be removed from the NGOM this year, they feel a 95,000 pound TAC (75,000 pounds after the conservation payback) strikes an appropriate balance between caution and opportunity. I ask that you NOT prorate this TAC, which would increase it slightly. The purpose of prorating is to account for the extra month of fishing in FY2017. The NGOM will certainly close in a matter of weeks, so there is no need to add pounds to "get through" March 2017.

The Council noted current NGOM measures were established as a placeholder for management for when scallops returned to the area. They have returned. And measures to effectively protect the area are long overdue.

Yours truly,

Togue Brawn
Maine Dayboat Scallops/Downeast Dayboat

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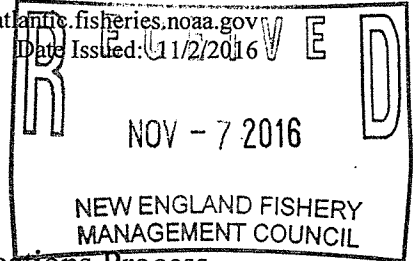


Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

NOAA Fisheries, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930

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<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov>



ATLANTIC SEA SCALLOP FISHERY: SCALLOP PERMIT HOLDERS

New Start Date for the Scallop Fishing Year and New Specifications Process
Effective Date: December 5, 2016

On October 17, 2016, NMFS approved Scallop Amendment 19. This action implements two measures that will allow timelier implementation of annual scallop fishing allocations.

Amendment 19:

- 1) Moves the start of the scallop fishing year from March 1 to April 1, and
- 2) Establishes a specifications process outside of the current framework adjustment process.

Changing the Start of the Fishing Year to April 1

Pushing the fishing year back one month (from March 1 to April 1) increases the likelihood that NMFS would be able to implement simple specifications actions at the start of the scallop fishing year on a more consistent basis and not need to implement default measures at all.

****The 2017 fishing year will still start on March 1.****

In order to provide the industry time to account for the change in the start of the fishing year, fishing year 2017 will still start on March 1, 2017. The 2017 fishing year will be 13 months (March 1, 2017-March 31, 2018). We will then start the 2018 fishing year on April 1, 2018.

New Specification Process

Amendment 19 creates a new specifications process for the scallop fishery. This will help ensure that the annual specifications go into place on or about the start of the scallop fishing year, by:

- 1) Limiting the types of measures that can go into a specifications action, and
- 2) Removing the requirement for the New England Fishery Management Council to discuss measures over the course of two Council meetings, as is required for a framework.

For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Region.