



New England Fishery Management Council

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Council Streamlines Scallop Specification Process and Ranks 2018 Priorities; Discusses Enforcement Issues

During its mid-April meeting in Mystic, CT, the New England Fishery Management Council took steps to streamline the process used to develop annual specifications for Atlantic sea scallops. It also reviewed, refined, and ranked its 2018 scallop priorities and voted to send letters to NOAA Fisheries on: (1) enforcement-related matters; and (2) implementation of real-time, online transfers of limited access general category individual fishing quota (IFQ).

The Council recognized that several basic scallop measures regularly are included in annual specifications without being modified from one year to the next. As a new work priority, the Council approved having its Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) compile a list of these now-routine provisions with the intent of turning them into “standard default measures.” This way, the Council will be able to include default measures in specifications packages without having the PDT conduct extensive and repetitive analyses each year.

The Council determined that this move would:

- Help streamline the specification-setting process;
- Increase the prospect that final specifications will be implemented by the April 1 start of the scallop fishing year;
- Lighten the PDT’s analytical workload during the busiest time of the year for scallop analyses;
- Reduce the number of decisions the Council needs to make during final action; and
- Lead to more predictable outcomes for industry.

Given these considerable benefits, the Council readily agreed to add the item to its 2018 scallop priorities. It also voted to *remove* an item that initially was on the priority list – “gear modifications to protect small scallops.” While recognizing the importance of this work, the Council noted that gear modifications could be considered in future years and that several other actions were more pressing.



– Coonamessett Farm Foundation photo



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The Council then ranked the five items on its revised 2018 scallop priority list in the following order:

1. Develop an action to modify scallop access areas consistent with the recently implemented Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2;
2. Develop the newly approved “standard default measures” approach;
3. Review and address monitoring and catch accounting provisions in the fishery, including those related to hail requirements, IFQ vessels exceeding their quota, and possession limit overages, among others;
4. Consider limited access general category IFQ trip limit modifications; and
5. Revisit and potentially modify Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area measures.

In spite of this ranking, the Council emphasized that its most critical actions this year are focused on the 2018 scallop benchmark stock assessment and the specifications package for fishing year 2019 with default specifications for 2020. The Council then will work its way down the items on the list above, recognizing that work on several priorities may require more time to develop than is available this year.

In addition to developing the next scallop specification package and contributing to the new benchmark stock assessment, the Council will continue to support the Scallop Research Set-Aside Program and carry out regulatory requirements in addition to working on its own list of priorities for Atlantic sea scallops.

As for the 2018 benchmark assessment, the Scallop Stock Assessment Workshop (SAW) Working Group, which includes several members of the Council’s PDT, is conducting the assessment as part of the 65th SAW/SARC. The SARC is the Stock Assessment Review Committee, which will peer review the new assessment.

The scallop working group held a data meeting in early February and then met again in late March. The next meeting is scheduled for April 30-May 4. The scallop assessment results will be peer reviewed during the June 26-29 SARC meeting. A benchmark stock assessment for Atlantic herring also will be reviewed at the same SARC meeting.



Scallop dredges on deck, Cape May, NJ. – Jonathon Peros, NEFMC photo

- Documents used during the Council’s April 17, 2018 scallop discussion in Mystic, CT are available at <https://www.nefmc.org/library/april-2018-scallop-committee>.
- Questions? Contact Scallop Plan Coordinator Jonathon Peros at (978) 465-0492, ext. 117, jperos@nefmc.org. Also visit <https://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/scallops>.