



## New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116

John F. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., *Chairman* | Thomas A. Nies, *Executive Director*

## MEETING SUMMARY

### Scallop PDT Meeting

May 9, 2019

Conference Call

The Scallop PDT met by conference call on May 9, 2019 to: 1) Receive an update on Amendment 21 scoping comments; 2) develop PDT recommendations for the 2020/2021 Scallop RSA research priorities; 3) consider findings and recommendations from the RSA program review and develop initial input.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:** Jonathon Peros (PDT Chair), Sam Asci, Dr. Naresh Pradhan, Dr. Rachel Feeney, Dr. David Rudders, Dr. Bill DuPaul, Dr. Dave Bethoney, Travis Ford, Ben Galuardi, Tim Cardiasmenos, Mike Kersula, Danielle Palmer, Dr. Dvora Hart, Chad Keith, and Dr. Cate O'Keefe. Mr. Vincent Balzano, Scallop Committee Chair, also participated. Several members of the RSA program review participated, including Dr. Michael Sissenwine (Council member), Deirdre Boelke (Council staff), Ryan Silva (GARFO), and Cheryl Corbett (NEFSC). Several members of the public also joined the call.

#### **KEY OUTCOMES:**

- Council staff presented a draft summary report of Amendment 21 scoping comments.
- The PDT discussed 2020/2021 Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) priorities and agreed to continue to develop the list through correspondence.
- The PDT reviewed recommendations from the RSA program review, and began developing input. The group agreed to continue this process, noting that there would be a subsequent discussion at the RSA Share Day.

The call began at 1:00pm. Following roll call, Council staff welcomed Mike Kersula to the PDT, and acknowledged that several members of the PDT participated in the 2019 Pectinid Workshop in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Staff noted that the NGOM management area closed for the 2019 fishing year on April 25, 2019 for the LAGC component. Staff explained that the LAGC was projected to have landed the full TAC, but that final numbers were not available since dealer data was still being submitted.

**Amendment 21:** Council staff provided the PDT with an overview of the Amendment 21 scoping comments.

*Key points from PDT discussion:*

- The PDT noted that the Council may wish to explore increasing the amount of compensation available to LAGC IFQ vessels to cover observer costs even if the trip limit is not increased. One PDT member felt that this was currently an issue, though staff noted that the PDT has looked into this recently. The PDT also noted that NMFS has proposed to expand where LAGC IFQ boats can operate by expanding dredge exemption areas on Georges Bank, and that the IFQ component may choose to take multi-day trips without a trip limit increase.
- The PDT noted that RSA compensation fishing (even from research in the Gulf of Maine) has been done in other parts of the resource, though ME DMR staff stated they thought some RSA compensation fishing may occur in the NGOM this year. The PDT also pointed out that the current RSA allocation comes from the scallop resource on Georges Bank and in the Mid-Atlantic.
- With regard to the interest expressed in developing an RSA program in the NGOM, the PDT noted that no comments described the specifics of how this would be done, but that the general feeling of commenters was that a NGOM RSA program would be developed separately from the Scallop RSA program.
- The PDT noted that several comments received cited concerns of safety, trip costs, annual costs, and “inshore depletion” as reasons both for and against increasing the LAGC IFQ trip limit. The PDT discussed analyses that could be done to further explore this issue.
- The PDT noted that some written comments (both for and against IFQ trip limits) were made anonymously, and that some commenters made serious allegations about retribution for publicly sharing their point of view.
- A member of the PDT felt that a comment about mutual inefficiency in the LA fishery was relevant to the LAGC IFQ trip limit discussion and should be highlighted in the summary report:

*“it is important to remember that management of our fishery is based upon mutual inefficiency. That’s why we have restrictions on crew size and days-at-sea and access area trip limits, instead of allowing all of these things to be unlimited. These built-in inefficiencies are a big part of the reason why this fishery is so successful.*

*Next Steps:*

- The PDT was asked to provide additional input on this document by close of business following the call (May 9, 2019). Council staff plan to update the document in preparation for the Scallop AP and Committee meetings on May 22 and May 23 in Providence, RI.
- Council staff to follow-up with NEFSC SSB re: a project looking at fishing behavior in the LAGC IFQ fishery.

**2020/2021 Scallop RSA Recommendations:** The scallop PDT reviewed input provided through correspondence on the 2020/2021 scallop RSA research priorities.

*Key points from PDT discussion:*

- The PDT recommends that survey “areas of interest” (1b) be defined as places where the recruitment is observed in the 2019 surveys. This is in addition to the access areas of interest (1a), and broadscale surveys of the resource (1c).
- The PDT recommends continuing intensive surveys in the Gulf of Maine and NGOM management unit in areas that have been fished or are likely to be fished. This data collection is consistent with recommendations from SARC 65.
- The PDT discussed the utility of research on the impact of offshore wind development being funded through the Scallop RSA. Some felt the RSA was not the appropriate avenue to fund this research, while others felt that most grant opportunities would not be interested in funding scallop-specific research. Noting the PDT’s disagreement, Dr. Michael Sissenwine commented that this was an example of where an RSA mission statement could provide some guidance.
- The PDT discussed continued research on scallop dredge efficiency. Some members noted that this work has been funded through several RSA cycles and it may be time to remove the priority. Other members of the PDT felt that there continues to be value at looking into dredge efficiency because the results are used in management and there are still situations (high density) where estimates are not well defined. The group agreed that this should not be a HIGH priority in 2020. One member of the PDT who has been involved in recent work thought that a synthesis analysis would be a good next step to bring results together.
- Regarding turtle research, the PDT felt that discussion would be informed by revisiting the current Biological Opinion on sea turtles, and reviewing the RPMs to identify the research questions that have already been answered by RSA projects, and those that still need to be addressed.

*Next Steps:*

- PDT members review the remaining 2019 RSA priorities that were not discussed on the call.
- Mike Kersula, Dave Rudders, and Council staff work on language for a new potential priority that would address survey design in the Gulf of Maine.
- Dave Rudders and Council staff work on language for a dredge efficiency priority that would fall under “general research” – not a HIGH priority for 2020/2021.
- Review the research recommendations in the current sea turtle biological opinion.

**RSA Program Review:** Council staff introduced the RSA program review to the PDT, and explained that the group would be talking about this topic at the RSA Share Day on May 21, 2019. The PDT briefly reviewed some of the recommendations from the RSA program review panel and identified available materials that will inform a broader discussion on this topic at the May 21, 2019 meeting.

*Next Steps:*

- Circulate a table of all RSA program review recommendations to the PDT. PDT members will be asked to weigh-in on whether or not the Council should pursue recommendations.
- Finalize written comments on the report as a memo to the Scallop Committee from the Scallop PDT.

***Other Business:*** No other business was discussed. The meeting concluded at 3:30 PM.