



New England Fishery Management Council

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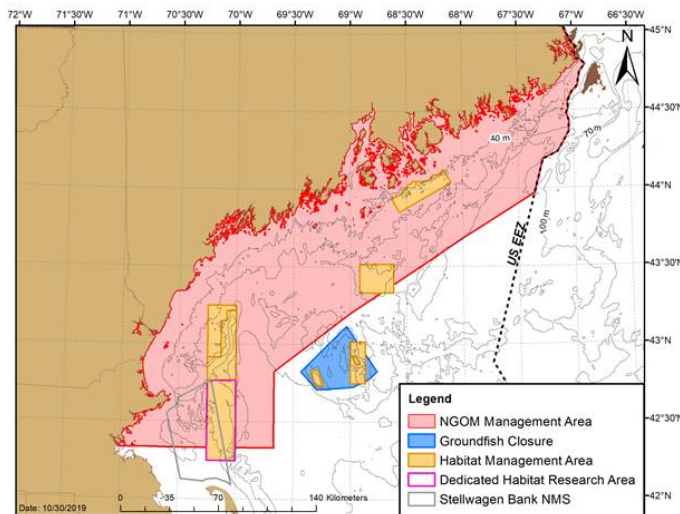
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Scallops: Council Approves Amendment 21 for Public Hearings via Webinar; Adopts 2021-2022 RSA Priorities; Initiates FW 33

During its June 23-25, 2020 webinar meeting, the New England Fishery Management Council made decisions that helped advance the development of three important scallop fishery issues. The Council:

- Selected several preferred alternatives for Draft Amendment 21 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and approved the draft for public hearings by webinar;
- Approved 2021-2022 priorities for the Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program; and
- Initiated Framework Adjustment 33 to the FMP to set specifications for the 2021 fishing year and default specifications for 2022.

Framework 33 Update: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, several of this year's scallop surveys have been delayed. Information collected during annual scallop surveys is critical for the specification-setting process. The surveys help identify areas with large concentrations of harvestable scallops, as well as new year classes of small scallops, which the Council tries to protect for future harvest. Given the importance of survey data for determining fishery allocations, the Council wanted to allow additional time for surveys to be conducted to the extent possible. Consequently, the Council also recognized that more time will be needed to complete Framework 33 in order to incorporate late-summer survey data. The Council now expects to take final action on Framework 33 during its January 2021 meeting instead of December 2020.



— New England Fishery Management Council graphic

Scallop Amendment 21 Ready for Public Hearings

Amendment 21 contains alternatives to:

1. Adjust measures for the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area (colored pink in the map at left);
2. Modify Limited Access General Category (LAGC) individual fishing quota (IFQ) possession limits; and
3. Allow Limited Access vessels with LAGC IFQ to transfer quota to LAGC IFQ-only vessels.



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The Council will send out detailed information about these webinar hearings in the near future and provide a rundown of the preferred alternatives. Hearing dates and webinar registration links are posted on the Council's [scallop webpage](#). Just look under the orange heading called **Upcoming Meetings**.

Save These Dates! Amendment 21 Webinar Hearings

Here are the hearing dates to mark on your calendar.

- [Wednesday, August 5, 2020](#) from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- [Wednesday, August 12, 2020](#) from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- [Thursday, August 27, 2020](#) from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- [Wednesday, September 2, 2020](#) from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Due to the evolving situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council may schedule additional hearings besides the ones listed above. The Council plans to take final action during its [September 2020 meeting](#).



– Coonamessett Farm Foundation photo

The Amendment 21 public comment period will open on July 22, 2020 and run through September 4, 2020.

2021-2022 Scallop Research Set-Aside Program Priorities

The Council established the Scallop RSA Program in 1999 and has been setting research priorities for the program ever since. Currently, 1.25 million pounds of scallops are “set aside” each year to fund research. For 2021-2022 projects, the Council once again identified resource surveys as its highest priority, including:

- An intensive industry-based survey of each of the relevant scallop rotational areas – Closed Area II, Closed Area I, Nantucket Lightship, and the Elephant Trunk/Hudson Canyon region – to provide estimates of exploitable or harvestable biomass to be used for setting fishery catch limits under the scallop rotational management program;
- An intensive industry-based survey of areas of importance, such as open areas with high scallop recruitment, with a focus on where scallop recruitment was observed during 2020 surveys and areas of the Gulf of Maine that have recently been or are likely to be fished like Stellwagen Bank; and
- A resource wide industry-based survey of scallops on Georges Bank or in the Mid-Atlantic.

Within this survey category, the Council noted that: (1) due to the coronavirus situation, some survey projects that were funded for the the 2020 field season may be delayed for a year; and



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(2) delays in previously funded survey work for 2020 should be considered in the evaluation of proposed surveys for 2021.

The Council also identified two non-survey research categories as “high” priorities in ranked order:

- **Sea Turtles:** This priority involves research to better understand turtle behavior in the Mid-Atlantic area and on Georges Bank via satellite tagging or other means. The work may focus on seasonal movements, vertical habitat utilization, and the status and range of the population in response to climate change. This research could assist in the collection of data that may be required by current or future [biological opinions](#) for the scallop fishery.
- **Scallop Biology:** This RSA priority category may involve research aimed at (1) better understanding recruitment processes such as reproduction, timing of spawning, larval and early post-settlement stages, age and growth, and yield; (2) examining environmental stressors on reproduction and growth and investigating mass mortality events like the recent “disappearance” of 50 million pounds of scallops in the Nantucket Lightship South-West Area; and (3) looking at natural mortality, such as scallop predation by starfish, crab, snails, and dogfish, as well as discard mortality and juvenile mortality events.
- **General Research:** The Council identified three categories of “general research” needs that are not ranked. These include: scallop recruitment supplementation to develop tools such as spat collection to supplement natural recruitment; bycatch reduction to reduce impacts on small scallops and non-target fisheries; and commercial dredge gear research to improve scallop catch efficiency, improve scallop size selectivity, reduce scallop damage, reduce non-target species bycatch, and to reduce fuel consumption.

NOAA Fisheries, which administers the program, is expected to issue a call for proposals later this summer.

2021-2022 Scallop Research Set-Aside Program Priorities

#	HIGHEST PRIORITY (1a, 1b, 1c)	#	GENERAL RESEARCH (4, 5, & 6 - not ranked)
1a	Intensive surveys of access areas	4	Scallop recruitment supplementation
1b	Intensive surveys of areas of interest and the Gulf of Maine		
1c	Broadscale surveys of Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic	5	Bycatch: Small scallops & non-target species
	HIGH PRIORITY (2 & 3 – ranked order)		
2	Sea turtle research	6	Gear: Commercial dredge research
3	Scallop biology research		