



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 5, 2018

PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante
(607) 592-4817, jplante@nefmc.org

Scallops: Council Receives 2018 Survey Overview and Framework 30 Progress Report for Fishing Year 2019

During its late-September meeting in Plymouth, MA, the New England Fishery Management Council was presented with positive news about both the status of the Atlantic sea scallop resource and the outlook for the 2019 scallop fishing year. The Council:

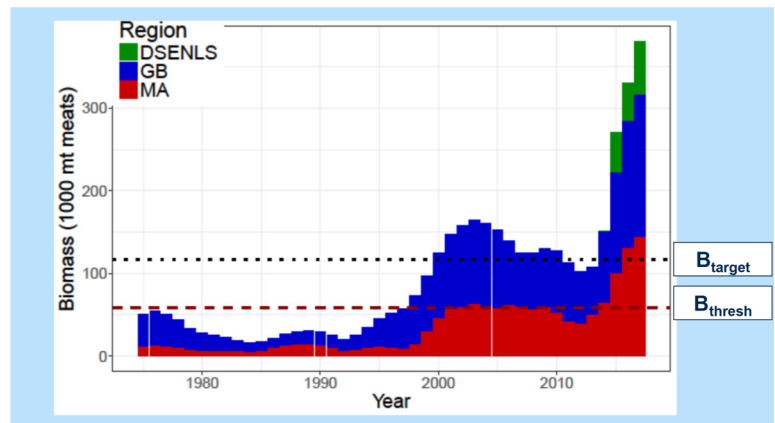
- (1) Reviewed results from the 2018 benchmark stock assessment for scallops;
- (2) Received a summary of this year's scallop surveys, which were conducted by five different research groups;
- (3) Reviewed the list of management measures under development in Framework Adjustment 30 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan; and
- (4) Discussed the Limited Access General Category (LAGC) Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) trip limit.

2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment

The latest stock assessment for Atlantic sea scallops was conducted through the 65th Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee (SAW/SARC). In short, assessment scientists concluded that in 2017:

- The stock was **not overfished** and **overfishing was not occurring**;
- Spawning stock biomass was at its highest level ever in the 1975 to 2017 timeseries;
- Spawning stock biomass was (1) **well above** its "threshold" level, which is the lowest point allowed before the stock is deemed to be overfished, and (2) **well above** its biomass "target" level, which is the more desirable stock condition; and
- Fishing mortality was at its lowest level in the time series.

Scallops: Spawning Stock Biomass 1975 to 2017



Good news from the 2018 Atlantic Sea Scallop Benchmark Stock Assessment. In 2017, scallop spawning stock biomass was at its highest level in the 1975-2017 timeseries and well above both the biomass threshold and target. – NEFSC, SAW/SARC graphic

→ Read the full scallop stock assessment report at [SAW/SARC 65](#).

→ View the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's [presentation](#) to the Council.



New England Fishery Management Council

2018 Scallop Survey Overview

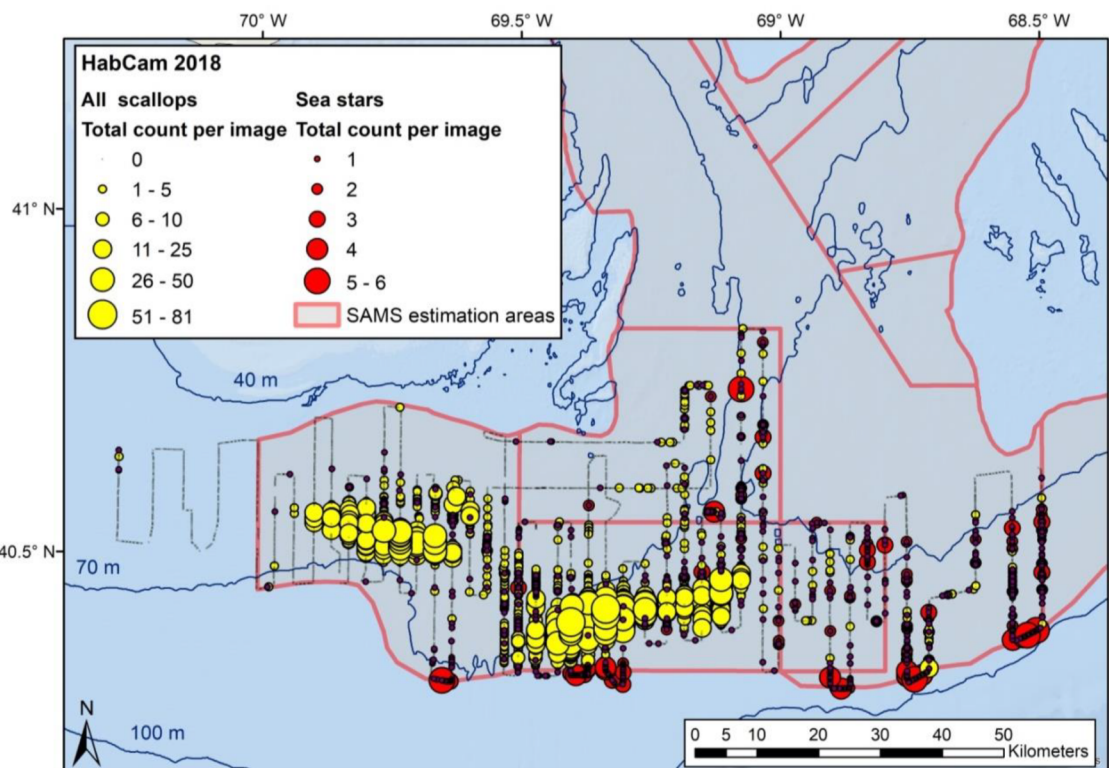
Here are the research groups that contributed to the 2018 scallop surveys:

- **Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)** – VIMS conducted four dredge survey cruises and did shell-height-to-meat-weight sampling in the following areas and timeframes:
 - Two trips in May covering much of the Mid-Atlantic;
 - One trip in Closed Area I and Closed Area II in June; and
 - One trip in the Nantucket Lightship Area in July.
- **UMass Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST)** – SMAST conducted high-resolution drop camera surveys of Closed Area I, the Great South Channel, the Nantucket Lightship Area, and portions of the Gulf of Maine.
- **Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI)** – WHOI conducted a survey in July of eastern Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic using the Habitat Camera Mapping System (HabCam) version 2.2.
- **Coonamesett Farm Foundation (CFF)** – CFF used HabCam v3 in July to survey the Nantucket Lightship Area. And,
- **The Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC)** – The science center, using the *R/V Hugh R. Sharp* as a platform, conducted dredge and HabCam v4 surveys in the Mid-Atlantic and on Georges Bank in May and June and did experimental work related to dredge efficiency in high-density areas.

More information about each of the 2018 surveys is available at [Scallop Survey Results: Short Reports](#).

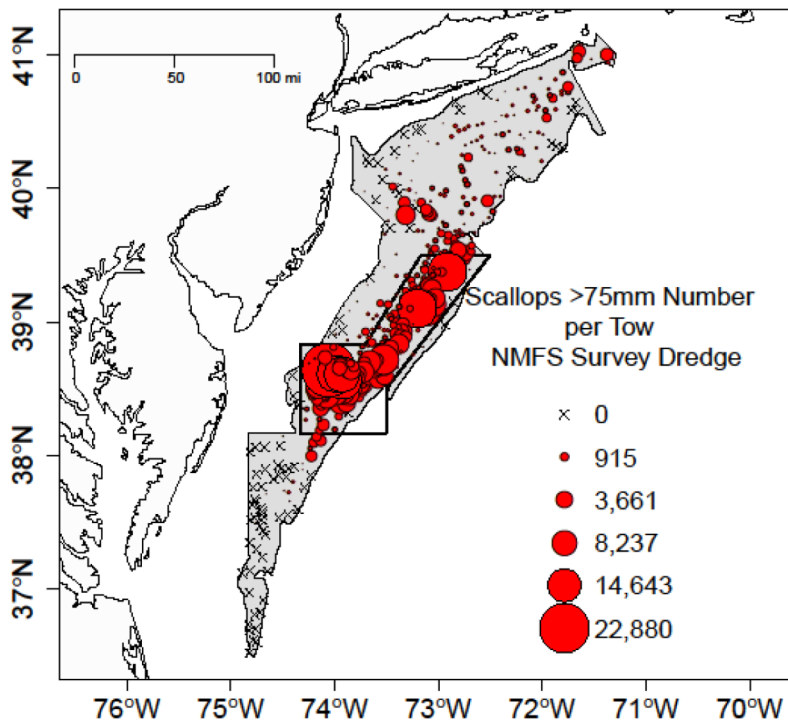
Coonamesett Farm Foundation's 2018 HabCam v3 survey (map at right) revealed high densities of scallops in both the Nantucket Lightship West and Nantucket Lightship South Areas. Sea star numbers also were documented.

– CFF graphic



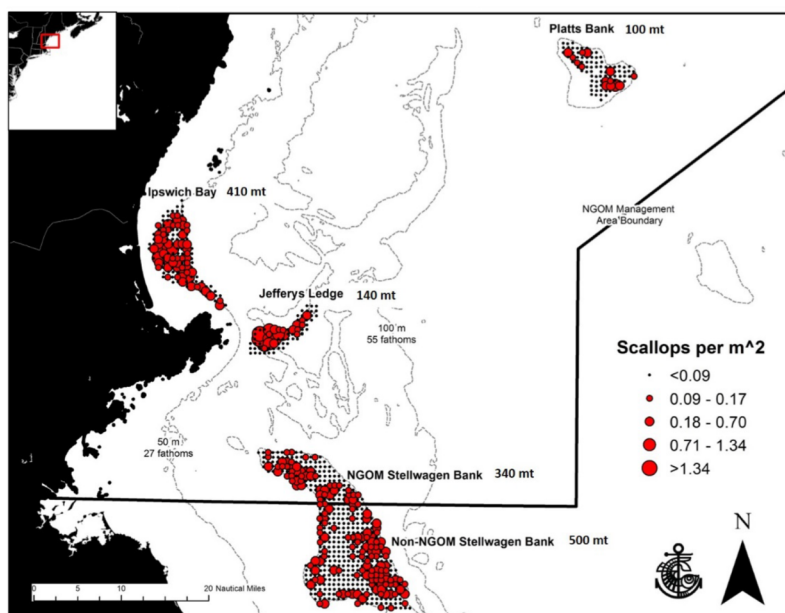


New England Fishery Management Council



ABOVE: The VIMS dredge survey found dense concentrations of harvestable scallops, primarily 6-year-olds, in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area. – VIMS graphic

BELOW: The SMAST drop camera survey in the Gulf of Maine revealed harvestable densities of scallops on Stellwagen Bank and in Ipswich Bay, as well as some recruitment on Jeffreys Ledge. – SMAST graphic



In general, the surveys found high densities of harvestable scallops in both the Mid-Atlantic and Georges Bank rotational access areas.

While the survey teams did not come across any particularly strong signals of incoming recruitment inside the access areas, they did find patches in Nantucket Lightship North and Closed Area II and also found positive signs of new recruitment on open bottom, especially in the Great South Channel, around Long Island, and in the Mid-Atlantic Bight.

Fishing Year 2019 Prospects

Based on the 2018 survey results, here are a few preliminary comments by the Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT).

- Closed Area I likely could support a full-time trip in fishing year 2019. The majority of exploitable scallops are located in the central “sliver” portion of the area and are eight years old.
- Closed Area II South does contain harvestable scallops, but the oldest ones are five years old, and the resource there has additional growth potential. The PDT and scallop advisors see “less urgency” in fishing Closed Area II in 2019 given the high density of older scallops observed in other access areas that are ready for harvest.
- Nantucket Lightship West holds some of the highest densities of exploitable scallops in the fishery and is a candidate for multiple trips in the next fishing year.



New England Fishery Management Council

- Nantucket Lightship North contains at least three different year classes of scallops and has average recruitment. The PDT views this area as a candidate for closure in 2019 in order to optimize yield in future fishing years.
- The Mid-Atlantic Access Area is dominated by a single year class of scallops that will be seven years old in 2019. The PDT identified this area as a potential candidate for multiple trips next year.
- The Delmarva area, where scallops are at the southern extent of their range, was converted to open bottom in 2018 through Framework Adjustment 29. Biomass has declined in Delmarva by an order of magnitude over the past three years and fishing activity within the area has been minimal. The PDT does not expect this outlook to change.

Framework Adjustment 30

The Scallop PDT will be analyzing several potential allocation scenarios for Framework Adjustment 30. These include five or six 18,000-pound full-time access area trip options under a range of open-area fishing mortality rates. On September 25, the Council added another option for PDT analysis that would allocate seven 15,000-pound access area trips to full-time vessels. The Council said it wanted to see the analysis and put all potential options on the table before making decisions at its December meeting.

Framework 30 will set specifications for the 2019 fishing year and default specifications for 2020, including: acceptable biological catch and annual catch limits; open-area days-at-sea; access area trip allocations; total allowable catch for the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area; General Category IFQ catch; and set-asides for the observer and research programs. The framework also will contain standard default measures to help streamline the decision-making process and provide stakeholders with fairly predictable outcomes.

LAGC IFQ Trip Limit: The Council debated a motion to initiate a new framework adjustment to consider increasing the current 600-pound trip limit for LAGC IFQ boats. The motion failed on a split vote, largely for two reasons. Several Council members expressed concern that any work on a new action could delay the implementation of Framework 30 and its new specifications beyond the April 1 start of the 2019 fishing year. Others wanted to consider the action in a broader context with other scallop priorities for 2019, which the Scallop Committee and Advisory Panel will do at future meetings.



Atlantic sea scallop, less than a year old. – Dvora Hart, NEFSC photo

Visit the Atlantic Sea Scallop
Fishing Year 2018 Story Map at
[NOAA Fisheries](#)

- For more information, contact Jonathon Peros, the Council's scallop plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 117, jperos@nefmc.org. Also visit the Council's [scallop webpage](#).
- The Council will take final action on Framework 30 during its December 4-6, 2018 meeting in Newport, RI.