



New England Fishery Management Council

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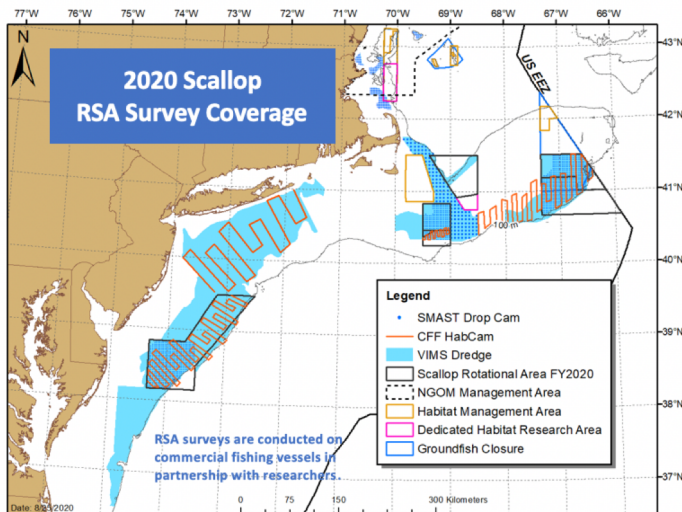
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Scallops: Council Receives Overview of 2020 Surveys, Along With Biomass Estimates and Initial Outlook for 2021

During its [December 1-3, 2020 webinar meeting](#), the New England Fishery Management Council got its first comprehensive look at 2020 scallop survey results for Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic. The results indicate that roughly two-thirds of the harvestable biomass – also known as exploitable biomass – is located in scallop rotational areas, and roughly one-third is available on open bottom. The Council will review Gulf of Maine survey results during its January meeting.

[This year's surveys](#) were conducted entirely through the industry-funded Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. The federal scallop survey was canceled due to complications associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are a few highlights for Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic.

- **Mid-Atlantic Access Area:** Survey crews continued to see scallops from the exceptionally large 2013 year class, especially in the Elephant Trunk and Hudson Canyon. This strong year class of eight-year-old scallops has supported fishing in the Mid-Atlantic for several years. Fishing is expected to continue in this area in 2021, although at a lower rate since the 2013 year class is nearing its peak. Survey groups observed patches of pre-recruit scallops in the open bottom, but these scallops will not be of harvestable size for a few years. Without a strong signal of incoming recruitment in the Mid-Atlantic, fishing activity may shift to Georges Bank for a while, where strong year classes have been observed.



2020 Scallop RSA Survey Partners

Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF)
Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)
School for Marine Science and Technology, UMass Dartmouth (SMAST)



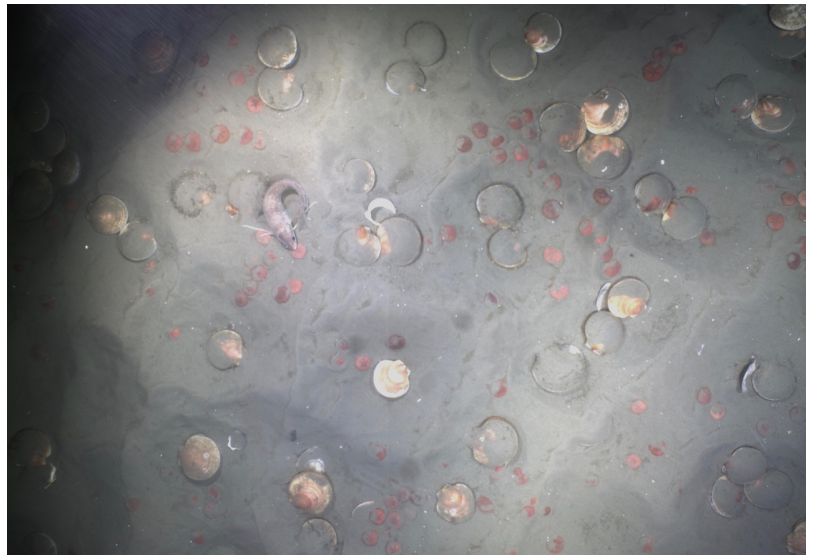
Surveys in the Mid-Atlantic found patches of small, pre-recruit scallops that will be monitored by subsequent surveys over the next several years.

– VIMS photo

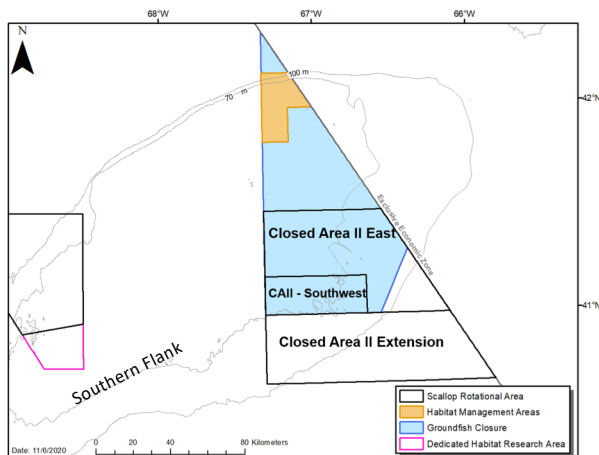


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- **Nantucket Lightship-South Area:** The deep water of this area contains an estimated 27.7 million pounds of densely packed, smaller-size scallops. These scallops are from the exceptional 2012 year class that settled in this area and now make up roughly 15% of the total exploitable biomass across the entire resource. They are slow growers in marginal habitat, but the available biomass easily can support fishing activity in 2021.
 - **Nantucket Nantucket Lightship-North, West:** Based on the 2020 surveys and previous work in the region, it does not appear that these areas within the Nantucket Lightship region contain enough exploitable biomass to support access area fishing in 2021.
- **Eastern Georges Bank:** In general, this is the highest biomass region in the Northeast right now (see map below). Several year classes of scallops are present, and RSA survey crews saw some evidence of new recruitment in various portions of the region.
 - **Southern Flank:** This is currently open bottom and is expected to remain so for fishing year 2021.
 - **Closed Area II East:** The Scallop Plan Development Team (PDT) recommends that this sub-area be closed in 2021 to protect a large set of pre-recruit scallops observed during the 2020 surveys. A closure would allow these scallops to grow to a larger size and be available for future harvest.



Above, scallops in the Nantucket Lightship-South Area as photographed by SMAST's drop camera during the 2020 survey season. Sediment covers many of the scallops, as is typical in this area. A red hake also is visible. –SMAST photo



Atlantic Sea Scallop 2020 Management Track Stock Assessment

- ✓ Scallops are not overfished.
- ✓ Overfishing is not occurring.
- Here's the [peer review report](#), which sums up assessment results for 13 large- and small-mesh Northeast multispecies stocks and sea scallops.
- Visit the [peer review webpage](#).

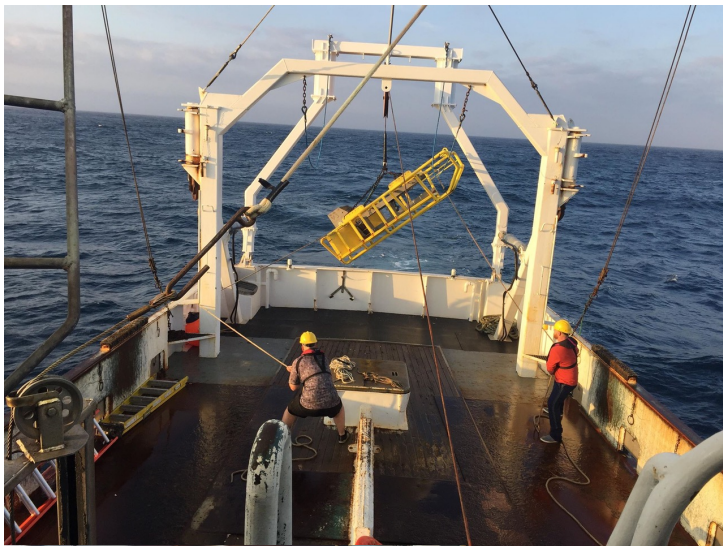




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- **Closed Area II Southwest and Extension:** These sub-areas of Closed Area II have the highest level of projected exploitable biomass for fishing year 2021. Most of the harvestable scallops are part of a large year class of four-year-old animals that are densely concentrated in a relatively small area. These scallops are expected to recruit to the fishery in 2021 and overlap with some older, larger scallops that are distributed throughout Closed Area II-Southwest and the Extension. The Scallop PDT is discussing options for allowing fishing activity in this area during the 2021 fishing year. The Southwest is the only Closed Area II sub-area that did not show signs of new recruitment during the 2020 surveys.

BOTTOM LINE: Based on the current level of harvestable biomass, landings during the 2021 fishing year are projected to come in at around 40 million pounds. The Scallop PDT is reviewing options to allow potential access area trips in the Mid-Atlantic, parts of Closed Area II, and the Nantucket Lightship-South Area. The PDT also will analyze a range of open area days-at-sea from 18 to 26. These allocations will be part of Framework Adjustment 33 to Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan.



Above: Staff from Coonamessett Farm Foundation retrieve HabCam v3 on the back deck of the F/V Kathy Marie during a 2020 survey. Left: HabCam Co-Pilot station in the wheelhouse. – CFF photos

Recent Scallop Landings and Projections

Fishing Year	Total Landings in Pounds	Projected Landings in Pounds
2011	58,461,465	
2012	57,098,684	
2013	39,807,589	
2014	32,020,980	
2015	36,974,195	
2016	42,423,177	
2017	51,325,269	
2018	58,100,342	
2019	60,453,876	
2020		51,600,000
2021		~ 40,000,000

Total landings are based on year-end catch reports, updated through November 3, 2020. NOTE: Actual landings for fishing year 2020 likely will be less than originally projected.

- The Council will receive 2020 Gulf of Maine survey results during its January 26-28, 2021 meeting. The Council also will take final action on Framework 33 during the January webinar meeting.
- Questions? Contact Jonathon Peros, the Council's scallop plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 117 jperos@nefmc.org. Visit the Council's scallop webpage [here](#) and check out upcoming happenings.