



New England Fishery Management Council

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Scallops: Framework 29 “Highest Yield, Lowest Impact” Alternative Advances Following NMFS Habitat Decision

On Wednesday, January 3, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), also known as NOAA Fisheries, informed the New England Fishery Management Council that it had “approved the majority” of the Council’s Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 (OHA2). The approved provisions include two actions that have a direct impact on Framework Adjustment 29 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan, which, among other measures, contains 2018 fishing year specifications and 2019 default specifications for the scallop fishery.

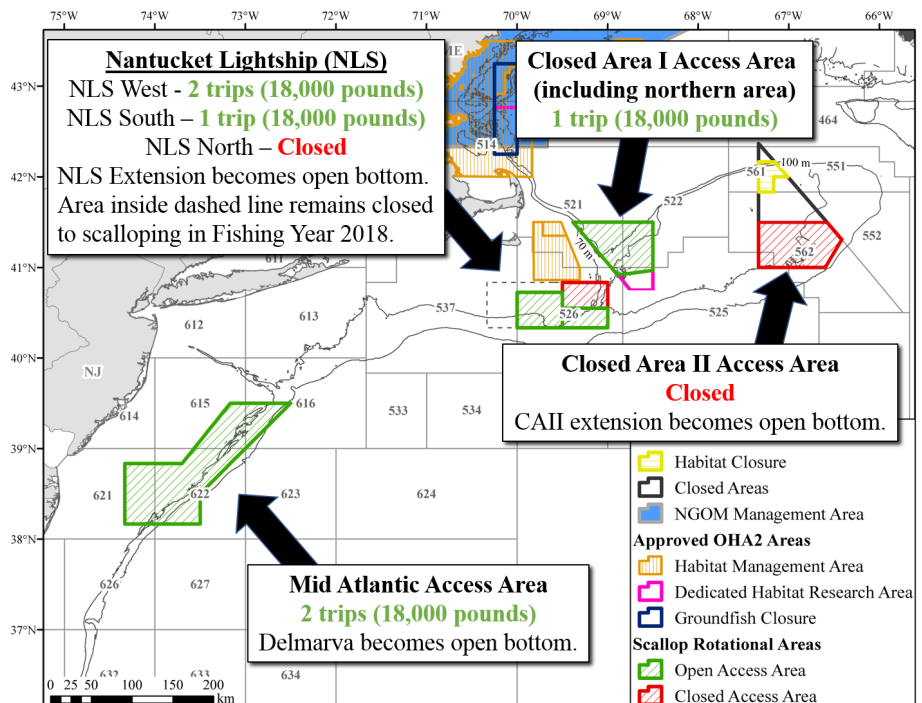
The Framework 29 preferred alternative that now will be advancing for NMFS review and implementation contains the following 2018 allocations for the fishing year that begins on April 1:

Full-time limited access scallop permit holders – 24 open-area days-at-sea and six 18,000-pound access area trips with:

- Two trips in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area;
- Two trips in the newly available Nantucket Lightship West Access Area;
- One trip in the Nantucket Lightship South Area; and
- One trip in the new Closed Area I Access Area with the northern portion, including the “sliver,” available.

Part-time limited access scallop permit holders – 9.6 open area days-at-sea and three 14,400-pound access area trips with:

- One trip in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area;
- One trip in the Nantucket Lightship West Area; and
- One trip in the reconfigured Closed Area I Access Area.



IMPORTANT: The above 2018 access area trips will be allocated to full-time scallop permit holders **only** after: (1) NMFS implements the final rule for the habitat amendment; **and** (2) NMFS approves and implements Scallop Framework 29. – *New England Fishery Management Council graphic*



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During its December meeting, not knowing whether NMFS would approve all of the proposed changes in the habitat amendment, the Council adopted four Framework 29 preferred alternatives for scallop allocations that covered the potential mix of access area possibilities – both with and without Closed Area I and Nantucket Lightship West. The breakdown of these alternatives is available at: <http://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/NEFMC-Approves-Scallop-Framework-29-REVISED.pdf>

Of the four scenarios, the one that now is moving forward for NMFS review and implementation provides the greatest benefits and is projected to result in close to 60.1 million pounds of landings in scallop meat weight over the next fishing year.

“By giving the fleet access to dense concentrations of scallops in the northern portion of Closed Area I and Nantucket Lightship West, scallopers will be able to catch their trip limits faster and reduce the amount of time dredges are on bottom,” said Council Chairman Dr. John Quinn. “This scenario has another benefit in that it lets us shift effort away from Closed Area II, which means flatfish bycatch will be lower and the scallops in that area will have a chance to grow larger.”

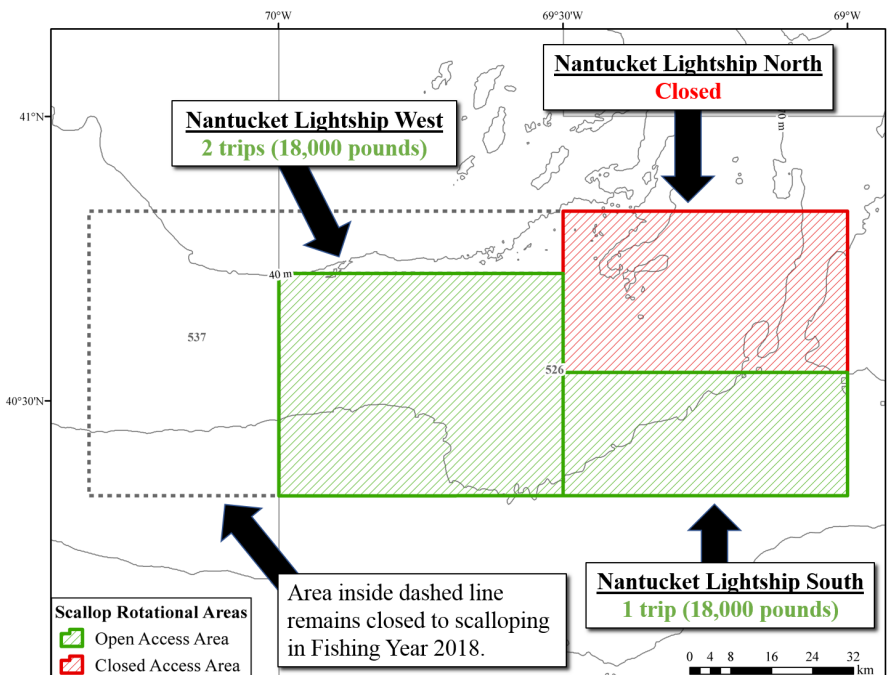
The Council also included a provision in Framework 29 to allocate the existing 1.64 million pounds of Closed Area I carryover that are still on the books. These pounds are from trips allocated to Closed Area I in 2012 and 2013 through a lottery system but never were taken due to poor fishing.

The resulting Framework 29 allocations for the **Limited Access General Category (LAGC) Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)** fishery include: (1) a 3,086,050-pound quota, equivalent to 5.5% of annual projected landings for the fishery as a whole; and (2) a total of 3,426 access area trips at a maximum of 600 pounds each into the following areas:

- 1,142 trips in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area;
- 1,142 trips in the Nantucket Lightship West Access Area;
- 571 trips in the Nantucket Lightship South Access Area; and
- 571 trips in the Closed Area I Access Area.

Framework 29 also includes flatfish accountability measures and Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area catch limits and related provisions, which are described at the link above.

The Council will provide a broader overview of the habitat amendment decision in a subsequent release.



Nantucket Lightship Area 2018 breakdown, full-time permits. – NEFMC graphic