



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## December 2021 Highlights: Council Supports Federal Trip Limit Increase for Spiny Dogfish; Approves 2022 Priorities

The New England Fishery Management Council met [December 7-9, 2021](#) by webinar and covered a wide range of issues. Here are some of the highlights.

**Spiny Dogfish:** The Council supported two actions related to spiny dogfish, which is managed jointly by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils. The Mid-Atlantic Council has the [administrative lead](#) for this fishery.

- The New England Council supported increasing the spiny dogfish trip limit from 6,000 pounds, which currently is in place, to 7,500 pounds; and
- As a 2022 dogfish priority, the Council supported pursuing a framework adjustment – at the lead of the Mid-Atlantic Council – to develop possible additional changes to the trip limit if warranted pending the results of the [2022 Spiny Dogfish Research Track Assessment](#).

The Council made these decisions after receiving a considerable amount of information, including:

- Dogfish actions taken by the Mid-Atlantic Council during its [October 2021](#) meeting;
- Recommendations from the Spiny Dogfish Monitoring Committee, the Mid-Atlantic Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and the Joint Spiny Dogfish Committee, which includes representation from both Councils; and
- The 2021 Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel [Fishery Performance Report](#).

The SSC did not recommend changes to the current acceptable biological catch for dogfish, which means the [2022 commercial quota](#) will be roughly

### Scallops, Groundfish, and Habitat

Need to find previously released news about Council actions related to scallops, groundfish, or habitat? Go to:

- [Atlantic Sea Scallops](#)
- [Northeast Multispecies \(Groundfish\)](#)
- [Habitat and Offshore Wind](#)



*Spiny dogfish caught by a Delaware surf fisherman.  
– Kelly Mathew Popper photo*



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29.56 million pounds. However, a trip limit increase was widely supported to help maintain markets and foster economic stability for industry members who remain in the fishery given that overall fishing effort has decreased.

- The Mid-Atlantic Council has submitted the trip limit increase action to NOAA Fisheries for implementation. More information can be found in the presentation and associated [meeting materials](#).

**Council Priorities:** The New England Council approved its 2022 work priorities for all fishery management plans and Council responsibilities. The complete list is available for viewing and downloading [here](#).

The Council's annual priority-setting process is of high interest to stakeholders in general. This year, an item under scallop priorities – limited access leasing – drew the most attention. After extensive discussion and following public comment, the Council agreed to conduct scoping sessions to first assess:

- The need for a scallop limited access leasing program, and
- What should a leasing program consider.

Once the scoping sessions are completed, the Council **then** will decide whether to move forward with initiating an amendment to the federal scallop plan to fully develop a leasing program.

The Council will review the list of proposed scoping dates and locations during its [February 1-3, 2022](#) meeting.

**Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful:** In January 2021, the White House published [Executive Order 14008](#), "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad." Section 216 of this order, titled "Conserving our Nation's Lands and Waters," centers around the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 – referred to as the [30x30 initiative](#).

As a first step, Section 216 resulted in a [preliminary report](#) called "Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful." The Council discussed two issues related to this report:

- An undertaking by the [Council Coordination Committee \(CCC\) Subcommittee on Area-Based Management](#), which was established to assist the CCC in responding to the 30x30 initiative; and
- A Council comment letter responding to NOAA's request for input on "Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful." The Council received a [presentation](#) on the [request](#) and approved the comment [letter](#).

The [CCC](#) consists of the chairs, vice chairs, and executive directors of each of the nation's eight regional fishery management councils. It works on issues that cut across all councils. The CCC Subcommittee on Area-Based Management is developing a report summarizing existing fishery conservation areas and may



– SMAST photo

*Visit the Council's December 2021 meeting [webpage](#).*



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prepare a journal article about area-based management in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ). These tools will help the CCC respond appropriately to continued efforts to meet the 30x30 initiative in the Executive Order. The New England Council will receive a more detailed account of this work during its June 2022 meeting after the CCC is fully briefed during its [May 2022](#) meeting.

**IMPORTANT RELATED NEWS:** During the first week of January 2022, the Department of the Interior (DOI), in coordination with the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, as well as the Council on Environmental Quality, announced the development of the [American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas](#) as part of the America the Beautiful initiative. The Atlas is “a new tool that will be used to track conservation and restoration of U.S. lands and waters,” the departments stated. The public comment period for the Atlas is open through [March 7, 2022](#), and virtual public listening sessions will be held on January 13, January 19, and January 21, 2022. Links to register for the webinars are posted [here](#). Sessions will be livestreamed on the [DOI Events page](#).

**Voting Recusals:** The Council received a presentation from NOAA General Counsel on disclosure of financial interests and voting recusal regulations for regional fishery management council members. Documents related to this discussion can be found [here](#).

**NMFS Assistant Administrator:** [Janet Coit](#), who became the new assistant administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries) in June 2021, joined the Council’s December meeting and introduced herself. After talking about some of her priorities within the agency, she addressed questions from both Council members and the public. [Here’s the audio](#) of the discussion.



Hawksbill turtle. – NOAA Fisheries photo

**Turtles:** The Council received a [presentation](#) on NOAA Fisheries’ outreach process for developing measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch in trawl fisheries. The agency is collecting suggestions and comments through May 31 and has scheduled three

virtual webinars in February and March, as well as call-in days. NOAA Fisheries is especially interested in comments on the potential use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in the [longfin squid, croaker/weakfish, and summer flounder trawl fisheries](#). Details are webinar links available on the turtle bycatch reduction [webpage](#).



## HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary is undergoing a management plan review. The revised management plan will be informed by the current condition of the sanctuary and knowledge of key issues the sanctuary faces. It will also help the sanctuary continue to protect natural and cultural resources.

**NOV. 30**

NOAA published the draft management plan and draft environmental assessment, kicking off a public comment period.

**JANUARY 21, 2022**

Sanctuary management welcomes your input about the proposal during a public comment period through January 21, 2022.

We invite you to submit comments in one of several ways:

- Submit online comments at [www.regulations.gov](#), using docket number NOAA-NOS-2020-0003.
- Provide comments at public meetings: details can be found at [stellwagen.noaa.gov](#).
- Electronic public comments may be emailed to: [sbnmsmanagementplan@noaa.gov](#)
- Written public comments may be mailed to: Stellwagen Bank NMS Management Plan Review, 175 Edward Foster Road, Scituate, MA 02066

Sanctuary management will consider public comments, then prepare a final management plan and environmental assessment.



Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary extends from Cape Ann to Cape Cod, encompassing 842 square miles of biologically diverse and productive marine habitats including muddy basins, sandy banks, boulder reefs, and shipwrecks that support more than 575 species of invertebrates, fish, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals.

For more information on the management plan review process and to access the full documents, visit [stellwagen.noaa.gov](#)

*The Council was informed that the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary’s draft management plan is available for public comment. The [draft plan](#) was prepared with input from the Sanctuary Advisory Council. Here’s how to comment by the [January 21, 2022 deadline](#). More information can be found [here](#).*