



New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2019

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

Scallops: Council Approves Framework 32 for 2020 Fishing Year

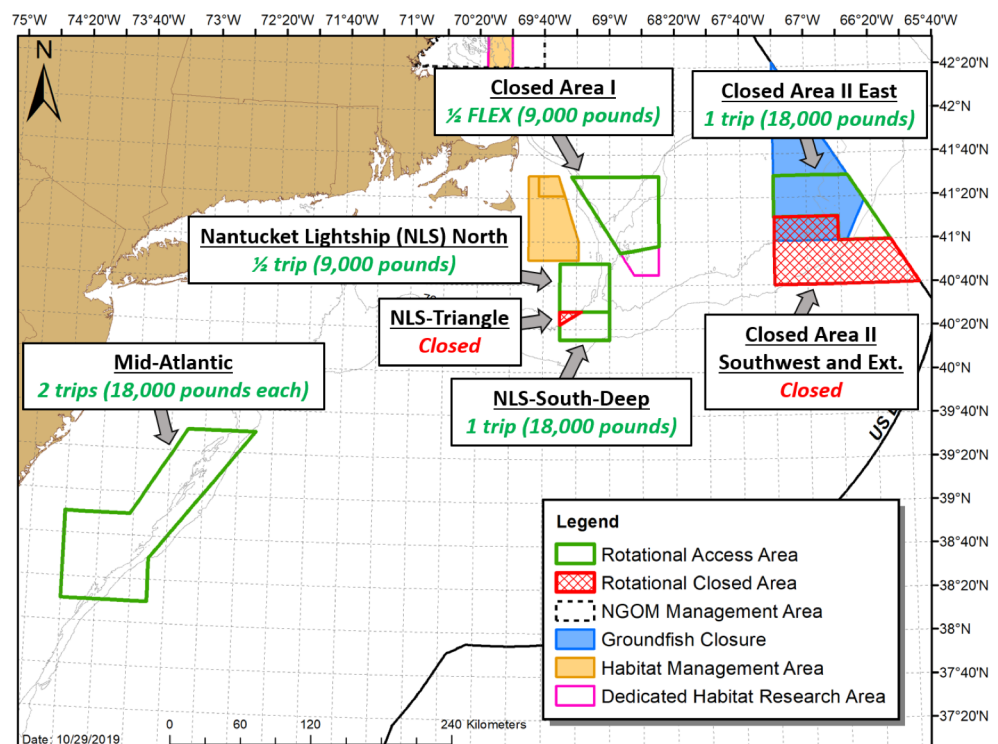
On December 5 during its meeting in Newport, RI, the New England Fishery Management Council approved Framework Adjustment 32 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan. The framework includes specifications for the 2020 fishing year, default specifications for 2021, and measures to mitigate impacts on Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and northern windowpane flounder.

The new specifications are expected to result in roughly 52 million pounds of projected landings in 2020 with an estimated ex-vessel value of close to \$487 million. Landings of this magnitude, while lower than the 2019 projection of roughly 62.5 million pounds, will remain well above the historical average.

The resource, which is not overfished or subject to overfishing, is considered healthy. Conservative management has greatly contributed to high fishery landings and revenues in recent years. Based on results from the [2019 scallop surveys](#), large scallops from the remarkably strong 2012 and 2013 year classes are expected to continue supporting the majority of fishing in rotational access areas in fishing year 2020.

The Council's Scallop Advisory Panel (AP) and Scallop Committee supported taking a conservative approach for next year, opting to leave some harvestable scallops on the bottom to support the 2021 fishery.

The full Council endorsed this strategy, cognizant of the fact that recruitment has not been robust. While this year's surveys did find patches of young scallops in some spots, signs of large, incoming year classes were not evident on a wider scale.



Full-time limited access scallopers will be allocated 24 open area days-at-sea and, as depicted in the map above, six access area trips in the 2020 fishing year, which begins on April 1. — New England Fishery Management Council graphic

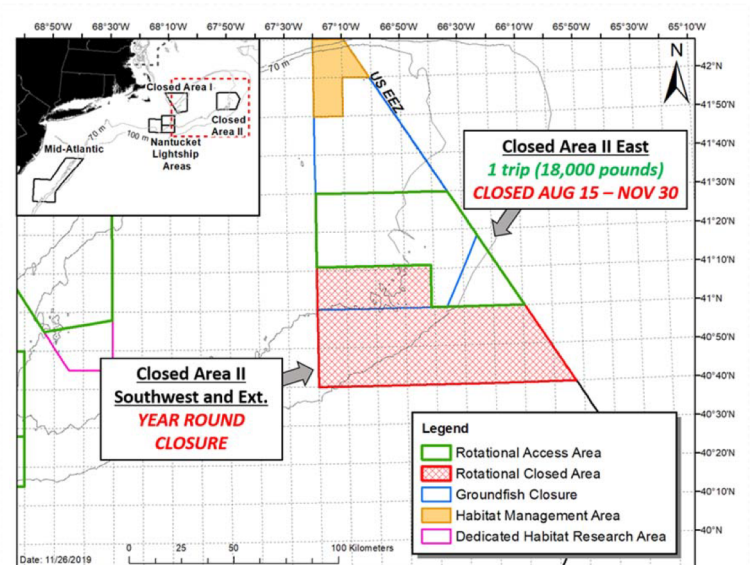


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Framework 32 must be reviewed and implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS/NOAA Fisheries) before becoming effective. The target implementation date is April 1, 2020, the start of the new scallop fishing year. Here are the major provisions within the framework.

- **Full-Time Limited Access Scallop Permit Holders:** Scallopers in this category will be allocated 24 open area days-at-sea and six access area trips as follows:
 - One Closed Area II trip at 18,000 pounds;
 - One Closed Area I FLEX trip at 9,000 pounds;
 - One Nantucket Lightship-North trip at 9,000 pounds;
 - One Nantucket Lightship-South-Deep trip at 18,000 pounds;
 - Two Mid-Atlantic Access Area trips at 18,000 pounds each.
- **Pound-For-Pound Exchanges:** The access area possession limit will be set at 18,000 pounds per trip, but full-time limited access vessels will be able to exchange access area allocations in 9,000-pound increments for all areas. For example, 9,000 pounds from Nantucket Lightship-North could be exchanged for 9,000-pounds from Closed Area II with another permit holder.
- **Part-Time Limited Access Scallop Permit Holders:** Scallopers in this category will be allocated 9.6 open area days-at-sea along with three access area trips – two being in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area and one in Closed Area II – at 12,000 pounds each.
- **Boundary Changes:** Note the boundary changes in the map on page 1 compared to the [current map](#) for the 2019 fishery. Some areas that currently are closed will revert to open bottom in 2020. Also, Closed Area II boundaries have been expanded, and the southwest and extension portions will be closed year round to protect concentrations of small scallops there.
- **Flatfish Bycatch Mitigation:** The Closed Area II Scallop Rotational Access Area seasonal closure will be extended an additional two weeks, running from August 15 through November 30 during the 2020 fishing year. Compensation fishing under the Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program will be allowed only on open bottom, in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area, and, to a certain extent, in the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area. Collectively, these measures will help reduce impacts on Georges Bank yellowtail flounder and northern windowpane flounder, as will the southwest/extension year-round closure in Closed Area II.

The “FLEX” trip in Closed Area I gives scallopers the ability to fish part or all of this 9,000-pound trip in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area rather than Closed Area I.



– New England Fishery Management Council graphic



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- **Nantucket Lightship South-Deep Crew Limits:** Dense aggregations of slow-growing, aging scallops are located in this deep-water area. The scallops are marketable but smaller in size, taking longer to handle and shuck. As such, Framework 32 will allow a two-person increase in the crew limit for *this area only*, bringing the maximum crew size to 10 on full-time limited access boats and eight on single dredge boats.
- **Limited Access General Category (LAGC) Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Permit Holders:** LAGC IFQ fishermen, who receive 5.5% of the sub-annual catch target for scallops as quota, will be allocated a total of 2,855 access area trips. Trips that initially were allocated to Closed Area II – a long distance for many vessels in this category – will be redistributed to Closed Area I and Nantucket Lightship-North.
- **Fishing Year 2021 Default:** Full-time limited access scallopers will be allowed to fish 75% of this year's open area days-at-sea and make one 18,000-pound trip in the Mid-Atlantic Access Area if implementation of new 2021 measures is delayed. Default measures are in place for other permit categories as well.

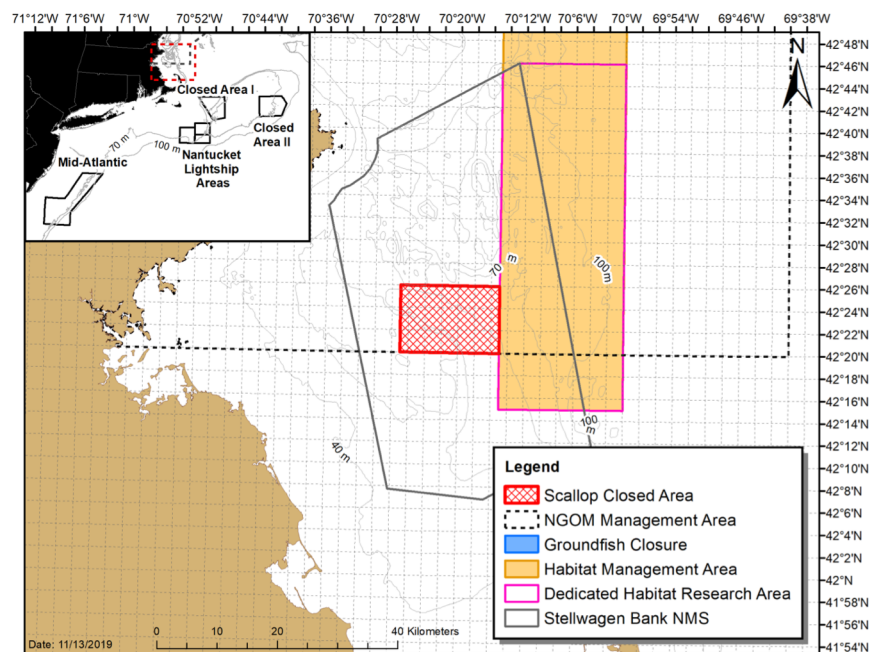
Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area / Stellwagen Bank Closure Area

Framework 32 proposes to set the total allowable catch (TAC) for the Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area at 350,000 pounds for 2020. The TAC will be divided under the same temporary approach used the past two years, which results in the first 70,000 pounds going to the LAGC fishery and the rest being split 50/50 between the LAGC fishery and the limited access fleet that holds IFQ. Under this formula, the LAGC fishery will receive 210,000 pounds. The limited access fishery will receive 140,000 pounds, which can be utilized *only* through RSA fishing within the NGOM area.

In a positive development, the 2019 scallop surveys found high densities of small scallops within a portion of Stellwagen Bank that's located within the NGOM area (see red-hatched box on the map at right). The Council supported closing this area for two years to protect these new recruits and allow them to grow and contribute to the fishery in future years.

GET MORE INFO: Framework 32 contains several other measures and specifications.

- All documents and presentation used during the Council's discussion can be found [here](#).
- Questions? Contact Jonathon Peros, the Council's scallop plan coordinator, at (978) 465-0492, ext. 117, jperos@nefmc.org.



The proposed two-year scallop closure on Stellwagen Bank is located within the red-hatched box in the map above. – New England Fishery Management Council graphic