



# New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 9, 2022

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

## Scallops: Council Signs Off on Framework 36 with Specifications and Other Measures for 2023 Fishing Year

The New England Fishery Management Council took final action on 2023 fishing year specifications for the Atlantic sea scallop fishery when it met [December 5-9, 2022 in Newport, RI](#). The measures are contained in Framework Adjustment 36 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan and include default specifications for fishing year 2024. The new scallop fishing year begins on April 1. NOAA Fisheries must review and implement the framework before the measures take effect.

Scallops are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring, which indicates the resource remains healthy. However, total biomass is down considerably from the past several years. [Survey biomass estimates in 2022](#) were the lowest since 1999. The exceptionally large 2012 and 2013 year classes of scallops that drove landings up above 50 million pounds from 2018 through 2020 have passed through the fishery. Since 2013, recruitment has been below average in the Mid-Atlantic and average on Georges Bank until this year and last.

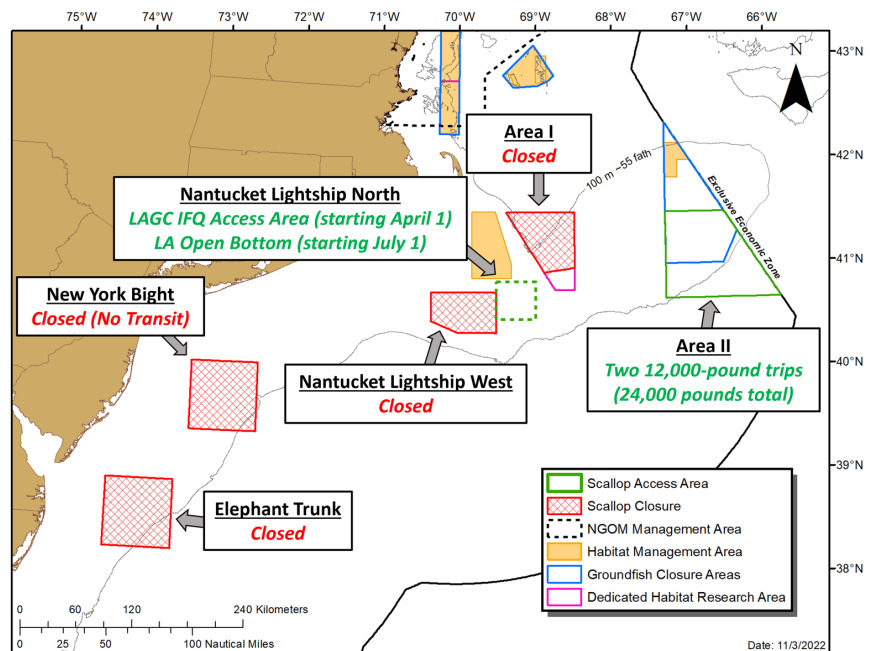
The Council considered these factors when selecting landings targets for the 2023 fishing year. The measures selected are projected to result in roughly 25 million pounds of landings valued at roughly \$398 million.

### Closed Areas for 2023

In order to protect recent recruitment and conserve scallops for future harvest, the Council adopted four closed areas for 2023 (see map). This approach was deemed to be in the best interest of the fishery overall. The closed areas are:

- **Area I:** Surveys in 2022 found strong recruitment in this area, which made it a prime closure candidate.

### 2023 Scallop Fishery Closed Areas and Access Area Trips



*The access area trips and poundage shown above are for full-time limited access scallop permit holders. Part-time permit holders will be allocated one 9,600-pound trip into Scallop Access Area II. – New England Fishery Management Council graphic*



# New England Fishery Management Council

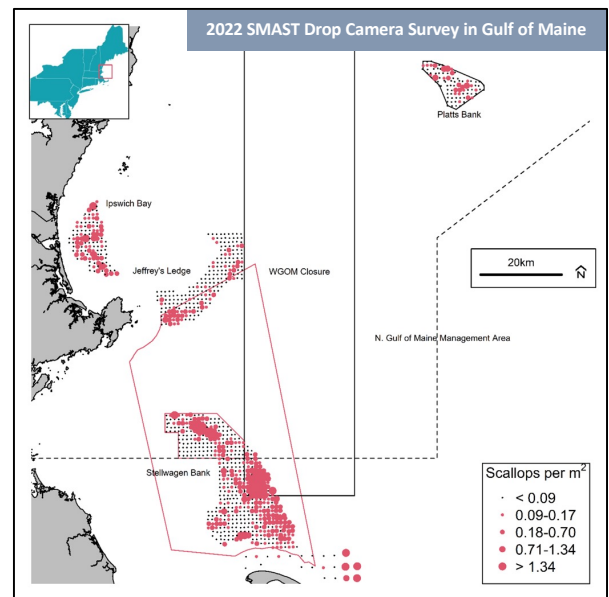
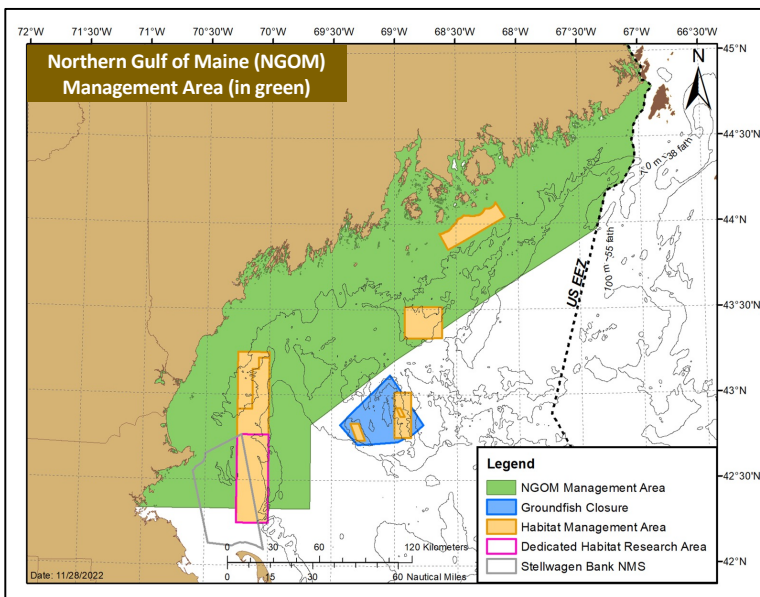
- **Nantucket Lightship West:** This area, which was closed last year, continues to harbor concentrations of scallops that are too small to be retained by the 4” rings in scallop dredges.
- **New York Bight:** This area also was closed last year. With another year of protection in the absence of fishing, these scallops are likely to be ready to contribute to landings next year.
- **Elephant Trunk:** Surveys in 2022 found notable concentrations of small scallops around 55 millimeters. Without fishing pressure, the closure here will help these scallops optimize their growth and allow them to spawn before being harvested.

## What’s in Framework Adjustment 36?

In addition to the four closed areas, Framework 36 includes the following measures.

**Updated OFLs and ABCs:** The framework contains an updated overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the 2023 fishing year and a default OFL and ABC for 2024 based on the most recent survey information and [recommendations](#) from the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee.

**Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area:** The Council voted to set total allowable landings (TAL) for the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area based on: (1) a fishing mortality rate of 0.15; and (2) exploitable biomass from Stellwagen Bank, Ipswich Bay, and Jeffrey’s Ledge (see map below at right). This results in a 2023 TAL of 434,311 pounds. Using the formula developed under [Amendment 21](#) to the scallop plan, deductions are made off-the-top of the TAL to contribute to the fishery’s Scallop Research Set-Aside Program and the Observer Set-Aside Program. This results in a 2023 Northern Gulf of Maine Set-Aside of 380,855 pounds, which includes a deduction for a past overage. The 2024 default is 285,641 pounds.



*The Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area is shown in green on the left map above. Mean scallop density for all sizes, including scallops less than 40 millimeters in shell height, are shown in the map at right for each station from the 2022 Gulf of Maine drop camera survey conducted by the UMass Dartmouth School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST).*



# New England Fishery Management Council

Under the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan, limited access permit holders are allocated 94.5% of the sub-annual catch limit after off-the-top deductions are made, and the limited access general category component of the fishery is allocated 5.5% of the sub-annual catch limit.

**Limited Access Full-Time, Part-Time Component:** The Council supported allocating:

- Two 12,000-pound access area trips into Area II and 24 open area days-at-sea for **full-time** limited access scallop permit holders (see map on page 1); and
- One 9,600-pound trip into Area II and 9.6 open area days-at-sea for **part-time** permit holders.

**Limited Access General Category (LAGC) Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ):** The total LAGC IFQ allocation under Framework 36 will be 1.26 million pounds. LAGC IFQ permit holders will be allocated a total of 571 access area trips under Framework 36. Given that many of these vessels are smaller in size and have additional weather and range challenges in reaching Area II, the Council voted to allow LAGC IFQ vessels to fish their access area trips in the Nantucket Lightship North in addition to Area II. The Nantucket Lightship North will be reserved for LAGC IFQ access area fishing from April 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023. On July 1, 2023, the Nantucket Lightship North will revert to open bottom for limited access vessels fishing on open area days-at-sea. LAGC IFQ vessels will be able to continue fishing the area until the total number of access area trips have been taken. After that, the area will be accessible to LAGC IFQ vessels as open bottom.

**Other Measures:** Framework Adjustment 36 also contains:

- A Limited Access General Category incidental target total allowable catch of 50,000 pounds;
- A provision stating that fishing under the Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program must be conducted on open bottom;
- Fishing year 2024 default measures; and more.

## Find Out More

- Scallop documents and the presentation viewed during the December Council meeting are posted [here](#).
- Visit the Council's [scallop webpage](#) and Scallop Survey Working Group [webpage](#).

**Questions?** Contact Jonathon Peros, the Council's scallop plan coordinator, at [jperos@nemfc.org](mailto:jperos@nemfc.org).



*Juvenile scallops collected by the survey dredge during the 2022 Area II survey conducted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). – VIMS photo*