



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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New England Fishery Council Approves Individual Quota Allocations for Scallop General Category Vessels

NEWBURYPORT, MA Based on advice from its industry advisors and months of public meetings with fishermen, the New England Fishery Management Council placed its final stamp of approval on a quota management system for the general category scallop fleet. Amendment 11 to the Council's Sea Scallop Plan will control the number of boats and the amount of fishing allowed by a group of relatively small-scale, inshore boats that now number about 3,000. In doing so, the Council hopes to effectively reduce the risk of scallop overfishing from this segment of the fishery and control harvesting capacity.

The general category fishery operates from Maine to North Carolina, and anyone can apply for and receive a permit to fish for 400 pounds of scallops per trip. The number of vessels has jumped over the last decade, an increase largely driven by the \$9-10 per-pound price that was paid to a vessel for its scallop catch in recent years, as well an abundant inshore scallop resource.

If final approval is given by NOAA Fisheries Service, the Council's regulatory partner, Amendment 11 to the Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan would limit participation by requiring specific qualification criteria before a fishing permit would be issued. To be eligible, a vessel must have had a permit before November 1, 2004 and landed at least 1,000 pounds in any one year during the qualification period selected by the Council (March 1, 2000 - November 1, 2004). The entire general category fleet would be allocated five percent of the expected total allowable scallop catch annually. Following that process, each vessel would receive its own individual allocation in pounds of scallops, an amount based on the boat's scallop catch history.

In seeking to maintain the historical character of a very diverse fleet made up of some full-time, as well as many part-time and seasonal participants, the Council also included a provision to establish separate rules for the northern Gulf of Maine. The intent is to allow small-boat fishermen from coastal communities an opportunity to fish on inshore scallop beds in federal waters, but at a reduced level of access (200 pounds of scallops per-trip). In turn, permit qualifications for the area would be less restrictive and participants would operate under a separate fixed total allowable catch for the area.

The Council and its industry advisors have been working on the amendment for a over a year in order to cap the growth of the general category segment of the fishery so that it does not threaten the health of the scallop resource overall. Scallops are not overfished and are currently priced at about \$6-7 per pound. In 2006 the scallop harvest totaled over 57 million pounds and was worth about \$375 million.

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