Final Scallop PDT Meeting Summary
Tuesday, February 12, 2013
Mariners House - Boston, MA

PDT members in attendance: Deirdre Boelke, Demet Haksever, David Rudders, Dvora Hart, Chad Keith, Emily Gilbert, Travis Ford, Evan Bing-Sawyer, and Brian Hooper.
Mary-Beth Tooley - Chair of the Scallop Committee
Michelle Bachman and Dave Stevenson – Habitat PDT members
2 members of the public attended in the audience

Purpose of Meeting: Plan for Framework 25, review progress on IFQ Performance Report, review VMS data for LA and LAGC fisheries, discuss potential Scallop PDT involvement in EFH Omnibus process, and several topics under other business.

Review of Framework 25 Work Plan

The PDT reviewed a draft work plan for Framework 25, which summarizes the main aspects of the action, a general timeline, and PDT responsibilities. Similar to FW24, this action will be one year, fishing year 2014, and will not be implemented until May so updated 2013 survey info can be incorporated. There are several vacancies on the PDT and they will hopefully be filled in the near future (SMAST and NMFS Statistics Office).

The PDT briefly discussed if the Committee should consider including any additional issues in the framework. A member of the audience asked the PDT if something can be done to address the low catch rates in Closed Area 1, and if there are concerns about the allocated 2013 CA1 trips. Catch rates have fallen below 1,000 pounds a day in that area since the fall, and they are not expected to be much higher when the area opens for FY2013. About 1.5 million pounds have been allocated to that area for 2013. Possible ideas could be to allow vessels to use those trips in 2013 or 2014, or possibly those trips could be moved to another area. However, there will likely be very few areas available in 2014, so more likely those 2013 CA1 trips could be shifted to a different area in 2015.

Another member of the public raised a concern about the potential increased risk of non-payment for observer coverage if the FW24 measure is approved that expands the set-aside program to include LAGC vessels in open areas. Non-payment of observers is not a widespread issue, but still remains a problem in some cases, especially on LAGC vessels. If the program is expanded to include all LAGC open area trips as well this could become more of an issue. In the past the Council did not want to get involved in non-payment issues between individual vessels and observer service provides. However, the PDT does have concerns if this issue leads to biased coverage at all.

Finally, another issue came up later in the meeting but was discussed as another possible consideration for FW25 – modifying the broken trip provision. A representative from the Observer Program explained that there was a large increase in broken trips to Closed Area I in

the last few months. This can be typical during the last 60 days of the fishing year, especially for areas with lower catch rates. If vessels break a trip during the last 60 days of the fishing year they are permitted to complete that trip during the first 60 days that area is open again the following year. In many cases the vessel knows it is going to break the trip and does not intend to fish at all on that trip, but current regulations require the vessel to cross the VMS demarcation line and then break the trip. In some cases observers are placed on these trips and a vessel has to either cancel the trip because it would not be harvesting any catch to pay for the observer, or the observer is taken on the trip and nothing is observed. This practice is a waste of observer resources, and the need to cross the VMS demarcation line is a cost to vessels as well.

It seems that if the vessel knows it is going to break the trip to finish the trip the following year, a different system should be developed. Or maybe the Council needs to re-evaluate the use of the broken trip provision all together if the provision is not being used the way it was intended. The PDT discussed that several members will look into this issue further to better define the use of the broken trip provision and identify if there are more efficient ways to address this issue.

The PDT approved the draft FW25 work plan for the Committee to consider at their future meeting, and agreed that several additional measures could be included for consideration.

1. Measures to consider other fishing options for 2013 CA1 trips if vessels did not fish them in 2013.
2. Several members of the PDT are going to investigate the potential issue of non-payment of observer providers further and report back to the PDT and Committee
3. Several members of the PDT will also investigate the broken trip provision further to identify if there is a more practical way to address this regulation.

Review IFQ Performance Report

Demet Haksever presented a draft of the IFQ report she and Evan Bing-Sawyer have been working on. They are still compiling the main tables for the report about catch, ownership, etc. Next steps include summarizing the leasing data and describing recent activity for vessels that did not qualify for IFQ, time permitting. The PDT identified a handful of additional issues that could be explored. The PDT still needs to identify what possible indicators could be. A updated report will be presented to the Scallop Committee in March, and a final report may be ready for the Council in April or June.

Review VMS data

NEFSC has summarized LA and LAGC VMS data for all years available (1998-2011 for LA vessels and 2006-2011, excluding 2008, for both fisheries). Raw VMS data gives the permit number, the position in latitude and longitude, and the time. For the scallop fishery a location is given every 30 minutes when the vessel is on a scallop trip. For each map all locations have been summarized by 3-minute square. The distance between locations varies, and anything between 1.6 and 5 knots between locations is considered to be fishing. All the locations with lower and higher speeds, as well as locations near ports have been removed to filter out shucking and steaming time as much as possible. Therefore, the result is a depiction of "effort" in terms of the time a vessel is considered to be fishing.

Looking at these maps by year shows how much less fishing effort there is now for both the LA and LAGC fishery compared to previous years. Some locations near ports are probably just an artifact of the data because vessels slow down to 'inferred fishing' speeds as they approach port, and do not reflect actual effort. These can be filtered. In addition, the effort far offshore is probably from miscoded trips and are not scallop trips at all (perhaps squid?).

The PDT discussed that these maps could be used for the EFH practicability analysis. But they would need to be linked to catch data, which is difficult. Or the PDT could look at catch and revenue by ten-minute square because that data is already available. The PDT will continue to discuss options with the Habitat PDT, because the Habitat PDT/CATT economist is developing revenue maps based on VTR data. These maps will infer revenue to an area around the single VTR locations, the size of the area of inference modeled according to factors like gear type and trip duration. At a minimum, the VTR maps could be compared with the VMS maps reviewed at this meeting.

EFH Omnibus Amendment

Staff reviewed where the EFH Omnibus process is and explained that there are two primary ways the Scallop PDT can assist with the amendment and EIS development. Primarily, the PDT could assist the Habitat PDT with practicability and impact analyses of EFH alternatives. Secondarily, as the process moves forward in the relatively near term (2-3 months), scallop data could be used to help "fine-tune" the range of alternatives under consideration. For example, the Scallop PDT has detailed scallop data (abundance in numbers of scallops as well as estimates of scallop biomass) for most of Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic. The PDT discussed how these overall data sets could be used in the EFH process.

First the PDT reviewed an estimate of scallop biomass on the Northern Edge (Figure 1). Most of the current biomass contained in the current EFH closed area (the same boundaries are designated as a cod HAPC). About 50% of all the biomass within the HAPC is between 67.14 and 67.33 longitude and 42.05 and 42.12 N latitude, and 90% is north of 42.02 N latitude. The total biomass estimate for this general area north of 41° 30 is about 10,500 mt, or 23 million pounds. About 90% of that is contained in the current EFH closed areas (cod HAPC). VIMS conducted a dredge survey of the same area in 2012 and had very similar results, about 10,000 mt.

Next the PDT reviewed area-based estimates of scallop recruit abundance (2-year old scallops) from NEFSC dredge data. Table 1 summarizes the mean long-term recruitment in each area and Figure 2 displays the range of recruitment for all years from the dredge survey (1979-2012). Staff from the Habitat PDT discussed that this was a useful set of data for the EFH process. The Scallop PDT discussed a few additional analyses described below that will be done with these data and those will be forwarded to the Habitat PDT and Committee.

1. Provide current estimates of biomass in existing and potential habitat management areas. The current abundance estimate includes data from Habcam and NEFSC dredge data only. The PDT discussed expanding the data set to also include recruitment

estimates from VIMS, SMAST, and Habcam for areas that have been sampled by those surveys as well. The Scallop PDT will only be able to provide biomass estimates for EFH related areas on GB and SNE. There is no detailed information for scallop biomass in GOM areas.

2. Take estimated abundance of scallop recruitment (Table 1) and calculate projected biomass.
3. Forward the annual VMS maps to the Habitat PDT/CATT for comparison with revenue mapping effort they are doing.

Members of the Habitat PDT asked the Scallop PDT about general recruitment and larval production patterns on Georges Bank as well as the potential impacts of closed areas on scallop recruitment. The PDT explained that larval duration can vary and it is probably safe to assume that GB is a mixed larval pool. There are some disputes in the literature, but recruitment on GB is likely cyclical, and increases in recruitment are not exclusively or directly related to closed areas. Instead, there are signals that recruitment patterns on GB are more likely driven primarily by natural cycles and not closed areas. Cycles in recruitment have been observed before areas were closed, and similar cycles have continued after closures. The PDT also discussed recruitment patterns in the Mid-Atlantic, but they are not as relevant for the EFH process since there are no habitat areas currently being considered in that region.

The PDT also reviewed the current habitat research areas under consideration: 1) SERA II DHRA within and adjacent to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary; 2) Eastern Maine DHRA near Penobscot Bay; and 3) Georges Bank DHRA in/around the southern part of the CA1 habitat closed area. The only comment from the Scallop PDT at this time is that if a primary objective of habitat research areas is to test and evaluate the effectiveness of closed areas, then a portion of one or more of the final habitat research areas should be within the current closed areas on GB. So far the only area that has been identified on GB is the southern part of CA1 and that area does not seem to have a wide range of habitat types to assess the impacts of a closed area for habitat impacts. For example, it was discussed that a small portion of the northern edge against the Hague line and within the current EFH closed area would include a more diverse range of bottom types that have been relatively well documented.

Other Business

- **2012 GB Access Area Fishing Effort**

The PDT reviewed catch information for all access areas on GB from FY2012 to date. Most access area catch has been harvested: 83% of CA1, 90% of CA2, and 93% of NL from March – December. However, catch rates have fallen off very quickly in CA1 (Figure 3). Therefore, the PDT is supportive of exploring potential alternatives for the 2013 allocated trips in CA1 proposed under FW24.

- **Preliminary YT catch estimates for FY2012**

The official estimate of FY2012 YT catch in the scallop fishery is not available yet. However, the estimates available online through December 2012 are likely similar to what year-end projections would be. For GB the estimate of YT catch through December is 356,336 lb, or 103% of the sub-ACL. While this is over 100% of the sub-ACL AMs are not likely to trigger

because the total ACL is not expected to be exceeded and for 2013 the AMs for the scallop fishery are not triggered unless overall GB YTF catch exceeds the ACL of 1.2 million pounds. A more updated estimate of GB YT catch will be available by the Committee meeting in March. For SNE/MA YT, the estimate of catch in the scallop fishery is 120,177 lb or 43% of the total sub-ACL. Therefore, AMs are not expected to trigger for this stock either.

- **Whelks**

Staff received some emails from the industry asking about the potential impacts of whelks on scallop mortality. The PDT reviewed the issue and discussed feeding habits of whelks, the federal fishery for all whelk species from recent dealer data, as well as the overall assumed natural mortality of scallops in the Mid-Atlantic. In general, the PDT is not overly concerned with this source of mortality, and suspects that it is relatively minor compared to other sources of predation. The current assumption used for natural mortality of scallops in the Mid-Atlantic is 15%, and the PDT feels that assumption captures this potential source of mortality sufficiently. There is no information available that the PDT is aware of to suggest that a higher value should be used. Conducting research to better understand all sources of natural mortality is already on the list of research priorities for Scallop RSA projects. However, the PDT suspects that other species have greater impacts on scallop mortality, such as starfish. Finally, it was discussed that whelks are primarily scavengers and may be feeding on scallops that are already dead or recently discarded. The PDT will keep an eye on this issue in changes in abundance of the federal fishery occur in the future.

- **Impacts of soaking**

Staff received an email asking about the potential impacts of soaking scallops at sea on the assessment of scallops and assumptions about catch rates. Overall, the PDT does not believe that soaking scallops at sea is very common on scallop vessels, if at all. Based on reports from observers, soaking at sea is occurring on less than 1% of all trips and in those few cases it was not soaking, but treatment for preserving color. Soaking at sea may have been more common historically, when management was based on meat counts. It is uncertain what percent of final product is treated after a vessel lands the product. So long as this practice is limited, and dealer catch reports are based on catch directly from the vessel and not post processing shoreside, there would not be any impacts on the on the assessment of scallop biomass or LPUE. This question could be discussed further with the advisory panel.

The PDT will have a conference call in March, or meeting if necessary.

Attachment

Figure 1 - Estimate of scallop biomass on the Northern Edge from Habcam data in and around current EFH area (cod HAPC).

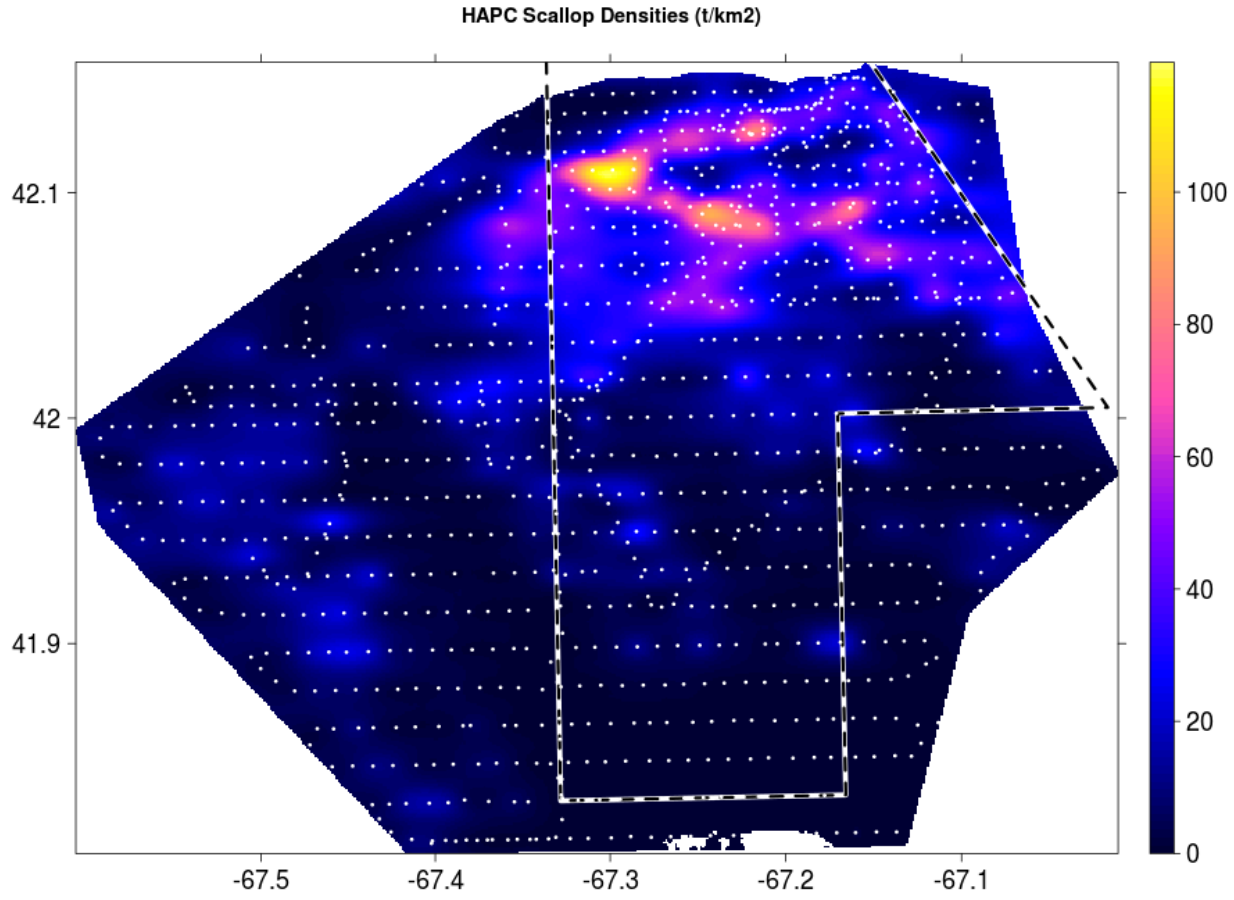

Table 1 – Summary of abundance estimates in EFH related areas

DRAFT - PDT reviewed on February 12, 2013

Estimates of scallop recruitment in EFH related areas - number of pre-recruit scallops from NEFSC sea scallop dredge time series data

(Values still preliminary - Scallop PDT still working on these estimates as part of EFH Omnibus Action)

	Mean	Median	Geometric Mean	Std Dev	Size (km2)	Yrs Surv	Samples / Year
Current EFH areas							
HAPC in CAII	426.8	180.8	123.6	653.6	641	29	11.7
CAI North	57.9	12.8	14.3	136.3	1937	33	10.1
CAI South	12.5	4.0	2.0	24.1	584	25	2.5
NLCA	59.1	0.4	0.4	222.3	3387	32	8.5
EFH areas under consideration							
Cox.Ledge.1*	3.0	1.0	0.4	4.4	143	3	1.0
Georges.Shoal.East	221.8	57.4	65.7	373.0	576	28	4.4
Georges.Shoal.West	4.2	1.3	0.5	6.9	912	24	3.5
GSC.1...Chatham.Light	239.3	12.2	9.6	821.2	185	28	2.6
GSC.2...Great.Rip	391.1	24.2	33.6	1223.3	636	31	10.5
GSC.3...N.of.Fishing.Rip	365.6	58.7	56.1	823.0	303	29	6.2
GSC_A	595.3	56.4	90.9	1414.1	1320	32	15.5
GSC_B	378.6	22.9	36.1	1211.2	1335	31	11.1
GSC_C	299.7	128.2	117.8	483.7	1656	32	22.2
GSC_FSF*	5.0	2.0	2.0	7.2	1479	18	1.9

* Estimates less reliable because of limited sampling

Note: EFH areas that are not included in this list have no overlap with the standard NMFS scallop survey

Column Headings:	
Mean	arithmetic mean of annual mean recruitment
Median	median of annual mean recruitment
Geometric Mean	geometric mean of annual mean recruitment
Std Dev	standard deviation of annual mean recruitment
Yrs Surv	number of years with at least one station (out of 34 years)
Size (km2)	Total polygon size in square kilometers
Samples / Year	Mean number of tows collected per year for years when the polygon was sampled

Figure 2 – Range of observed recruitment (on a log scale) from NEFSC dredge survey time series

The dashed horizontal line is the mean recruitment for CA2 north

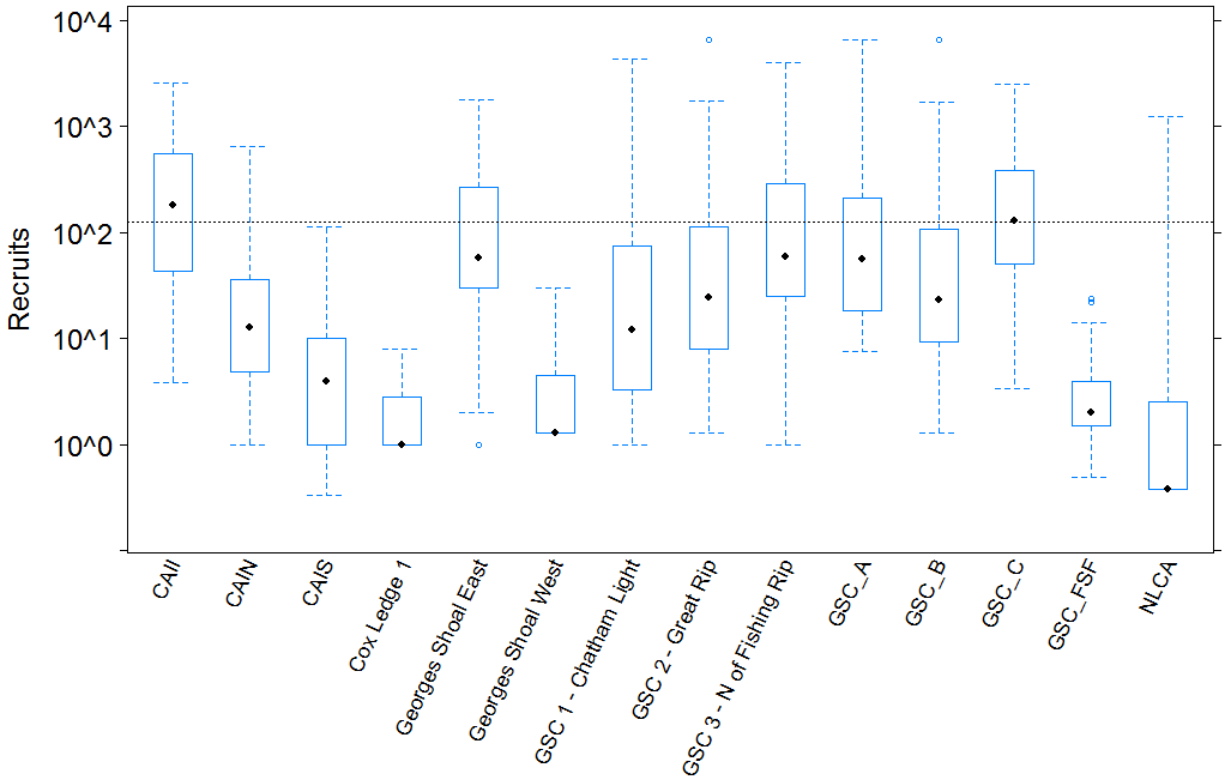

Figure 3 – Average scallop catch per DAS (in pounds) for LA trips in GB access areas (FY2012 to date – June 15, 2012 – January 13, 2013)
Note the x-axis is months after opening – so "1" is for trips landing in June, "2" is trips landed in July, etc.