



**Draft Scallop PDT Meeting Summary**  
Monday, August 19 and Tuesday, August 20, 2013  
Coonamessett Inn – Falmouth, MA

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PDT members in attendance: Deirdre Boelke, Demet Haksever, David Rudders, William DuPaul, Dvora Hart, Chad Keith, Emily Keiley, Travis Ford, Brian Hooper, Kimberly Murray, Robert Vincent, Matthew Camisa, and Lt. Josh Boyle.

About 15 members of the public attended in the audience

Purpose of Meeting: Review 2013 survey results and biomass estimates, brainstorm possible specifications alternatives, discuss several aspects of FW25 alternatives, review parts of LAGC IFQ report to date, and discuss potential priorities for 2014.

Specific PDT Recommendations:

1. The PDT will have a more thorough discussion of possible specifications alternatives after projections results are available (Sept 13 Conference call). But general ideas discussed so far are: splitting access across three areas only; three areas and limiting NL area to protect small scallops; two areas only and new closure in and around NL; and possibly allowing DAS to be used in access areas and not allocate trips per vessel.
2. Based on review of recent LPUE data, the PDT is planning to modify how LPUE is estimated in the projection model.
3. Consider a sub-ACT for the LAGC IFQ fishery to account for IFQ carryover (25%, 50% and 100% or recent carryover levels ~200,000 pounds.
4. Consider a larger set-aside for state water catch and incidental catch.
5. Input for consideration of a separate action in 2014 to address scallop access areas following potential modification of the EFH and GF closed areas

***2013 Survey Results***

- VIMS

Surveyed several resource areas including: Mid-Atlantic Bight; Nantucket Lightship, and the Northeast peak of GB. VIMS will be returning to survey Delmarva in September. Dr. David rudders presented the results from these surveys including the abundance and distribution of scallops, estimates of exploitable biomass, gear performance, scallop biology and product quality, and finfish bycatch. Overall, exploitable scallops in NL are widespread in the area, but density is low compared to 2012. Very high recruitment observed in the SE portion of NL (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). This is not usually an important area for scallops. Since the animals are very small it is difficult to quantify the biomass; thus estimates for this year class are very uncertain. Overall, some effort is probably possible from this area, but the PDT will need to be mindful of additional fishing pressure from RSA catch that will likely come from this area as well.

The northeast part of GB (Closed area 2 north and surrounding areas) had high abundance. Exploitable biomass in HAPC was reduced from 2012 estimates, but the quality was much better. Dr. William DuPaul added that in 2012 only about 50-55% of the scallops were marketable, but in 2013 it was much higher, maybe over 80%. The northeast part survey was in June in 2013, compared to late July in 2012, and that is likely one factor that improved quality. The HAPC is dominated by larger older animals, but there is a broad age distribution of scallops in the overall survey area, especially in the open areas west of the HAPC. The PDT discussed that if this area opens to the scallop fishery at some point the timing of the opening will be critical to reduce mortality from tearing.

Overall the Mid-Atlantic biomass is in good shape and smaller scallops observed in that area in 2011 and 2012 seem to have survived despite the storms and the relatively high fishing pressure in Hudson Canyon. There are larger scallops throughout the area, but at low densities (See Figure 3). The biomass estimate for Delmarva is similar compared to 2012. The PDT discussed that the product quality aspect of this survey is important and could be expanded to use similar industry standards for product quality. Overall some effort could be allocated from Delmarva, but the protection of incoming year classes is a consideration.

- **SMAST**

Emily Keiley presented 2013 survey results for SMAST. The optical survey for SMAST was substantially scaled back in 2013 compared to previous years. RSA supported survey trips included an intensive survey of CA2 south and Delmarva. The Delmarva survey was conducted in June and the estimate of exploitable biomass is 2,732mt; about double the estimate from VIMS (1,100mt). The size distribution for Delmarva was rather broad (147 scallops measured) compared to CA2 south (578 scallops measured) (Figure 4). Ms. Keiley also reviewed the status of other scallop related research projects SMAST is involved in including: a survey of persistent scallop aggregations, a scallop enhancement project in CA1, high resolution video survey with modified sled in NL, and the voluntary YT bycatch avoidance program.

- **Habcam**

Richard Taylor presented results from two surveys conducted by the Habcam team that focused on the northeast peak of GB (the same area that VIMS surveyed), and the access area in CA1. The results presented are preliminary based on analyses of 1 out of 200 images, which is about one image every 100 meters for the entire track line. The goal is to process 1 out of 100 images, or every 50 meters, for the final estimate in the specifications package. Overall biomass is very high in the HAPC, and biomass estimates are similar to last year (See Figure 5). Mr. Taylor highlighted that areas with large scallops did not overlap with areas of sand; the results suggest that areas dominated by sand did not support large scallops.

Overall biomass is low with little recruitment in Closed Area I and the results suggest that the area should not be included in rotation for 2014. Mr. Taylor suggested that all research projects would benefit from a standardized substrate classification schema since there are many being used in the region. Another issue discussed, which the PDT has noticed in the past as well is how to address reduced concentrations of scallops in access areas in the terminal year of an opening. Once commercial concentrations are fished out in an access area the final year is problematic when biomass is more spread out with lower catch rates and increased impacts on the environment. For example, these results suggest that biomass is higher in CA1 than the industry would probably expect based on recent fishing conditions in that area, but the biomass is not very concentrated. The PDT discussed that this needs to be carefully considered when allocating effort in the terminal year of an opening, or maybe areas need to revert to open areas sooner at the end of an access cycle.

- **NEFSC**

Dr. Dvora Hart reviewed the 2013 survey schedule and preliminary results. There were 183 dredge tows and 7 million digital images, compared to a little over 200 dredge tows in 2012 and 5 million digital images. There were some weather and mechanical issues this year that prevented more dredge tows, but overall the 2013 biomass estimates are more accurate than in 2012 since more area was covered with digital images. Furthermore, in 2013 there were more dredge tows from VIMS (about 535 tows

throughout the Mid-Atlantic and GB); as well as additional digital images from SMAST and Habcam within important access areas.

GB biomass has been declining since 2010 and in 2013 it declined in all areas, especially the Channel. The total biomass estimate for the Channel in 2013 is about 10,000 mt lower than it was in 2012, primarily due to high levels of fishing that went on in that area in 2013. Recruitment has been low on GB in 2011 and 2012, but this year there was a very large number of small scallops were observed in and around the Nantucket Lightship access area (Figure 6). The largest tow on record from the NEFSC dredge survey database was collected just east of the access area, over 60,000 scallops in one tow. It is very difficult to get a quantitative estimate of biomass from scallops this small. Many are assumed to escape the survey gear.

Mid-Atlantic biomass has been declining as well. This is primarily from depletion of the large biomass in Elephant Trunk and several years of poor recruitment in that area (2009-2011). However, stronger recruitment has been observed in 2012 and 2013. Once these scallops grow larger biomass in the Mid-Atlantic is expected to increase. The large number of small scallops observed in 2012 in all three MA access areas seems to have survived, but these animals are too small for harvesting. Recruitment in the MA was unusually high during 1998-2008, declined for several years, but improved again in 2011 and 2012.

A member of the audience commented that statistical areas 612 and 613 seem to be under sampled with the deferral dredge survey and there may be some biomass not included in the estimates. But Dr. Hart responded that the VIMS survey did cover that area extensively and the estimates from the two surveys are similar, so that is indicative that the estimate for that area is reasonable.

- Combined estimate

Table 1 combines the 2013 biomass estimates from all available surveys. Overall, biomass in 2013 is very similar to 2012 results, but lower in GB and a bit higher in MA compared to 2012. However, most of the MA biomass is not exploitable yet.

### ***Possible Specification Alternatives***

The PDT will have a more thorough discussion of possible specifications alternatives after projections results are available. But some initial ideas were discussed based on the biomass estimates available. The PDT discussed each area individually. Overall allocation will not be as high as they were this year. Exploitable biomass is lower in access areas than last year, and at best similar in open areas. Fishing year 2014 will be a balancing act because some areas have lower densities of larger scallops, but most areas also have seed that needs to be protected. If the principle of growth potential is used very strictly there will be larger swings in catch, which is not desirable for stable catches. The three access areas with some potential are NL, Delmarva, and CA2.

The PDT also discussed that a new closed areas in and around NL may be important to consider as well. It was discussed at the meeting that the Habcam research team has some extra RSA funds from their 2013 projects since the price of scallops was higher than expected and they may be able to go out and survey that area to help delineate the extend of the small seed observed. The PDT will review these data later in the fall if results are available. It was also discussed that these scallops are very small and will not likely be impacted by limited amounts of effort, so the area could be closed in 2014 as well if there is not sufficient information or need to close the area now.

Delmarva – There are some adult scallops in this area. Will want to fish those out, but need to be mindful of the seed in that area as well. While there may be growth potential left for that area, growth in the southern range is much slower than other areas. The PDT discussed that there is quite a variation in the biomass estimates for this area. The PDT discussed that VIMS is returning to that area in September, and it may be important to wait until that survey is completed before recommending fishing levels. Overall the PDT recommends that access be limited and done carefully; we need to be realistic and learn from our experience with this area in the past. Maybe one option should include access, one without to show how much catch is reduced, and one with only access in portion of the area with larger scallops to reduce impacts on smaller scallop in the area.

Elephant Trunk – Needs to remain closed; scallops are not ready yet. FY2015 is more realistic.

Hudson Canyon – Should remain closed; scallops are not ready and catch rates are falling in that area.

Closed Area I – Should remain closed. Some scallops in access area but very patchy. Some scallops in deeper waters north of the access area. Makes more sense to access this area when EFH and GF closed areas are modified, assuming they are for this area.

Closed Area II south – There is some exploitable biomass in this area but it is spread out. There is some recruitment in the deeper waters. YT bycatch is a concern if catch rates are lower and the sub-ACL is lower than it was this year. After the upcoming TMGC and related Council meetings the PDT will have a better sense of what the possible sub-ACL will be for GB YT and whether allocations for this area are feasible under the available sub-ACL of YT. The PDT also discussed that if the sub-ACL is very low it may be useful to evaluate monthly results from the SMAST bycatch avoidance program to see if there are areas and season to limit scallop fishing in and around CA2 to help avoid YT. Maybe only a portion of CA2 south should be available for scallop fishing if YT is a major constraint. The PDT can explore these options further once a potential YT sub-ACL value is available.

Nantucket Lightship – Some access is likely possible for this area, but it is not what it was last year. There is a lot of recruitment showing up in the southern part of the access area, so at a minimum access should potentially be limited to the northern part of the area to reduce impacts on small scallops. This should not be a major issue for the industry since fishing effort is typically very little if at all in the southern part of the access area. There are signs of high recruitment within the EFH area within NL as well as the open areas to the east of the access area. It may make sense to identify a new scallop access area that possibly extends in all three areas (EFH area, current NL access area, and open area to the east) in this action. Or even a future action if the appropriate boundaries are not known, or if it makes more sense to include in a subsequent action that will address scallop access post the EFH Omnibus action.

The PDT is cautious about the longer term survivability of the scallops found in this area since it is deeper than scallops are usually found in this area and trawl fishing for other species is relatively high in this general area so there may be mortality from other fishing impacts. The ability to detect these small scallops will improve with time as the scallop grow larger, so a more dependable estimate will be available next year. Finally, the PDT briefly discussed that RSA compensation fishing in NL may still be an issue in 2014. If that area is open for scallop fishing RSA compensation fishing can occur in that area and that is additional effort that may not be practical.

Northeast peak of GB – This area is not an access area but boundaries may be changing in this area based on the EFH Omnibus Amendment, possible implementation in December 2014. More intensive surveys have been conducted in this area in 2012 and 2013 in anticipation of these potential modifications and to

provide more information about the habitats and resources in this area. The PDT discussed that there is a high abundance of large scallops within the current EFH closed area, as well as portions of the open areas surrounding the EFH area.

There would be sufficient biomass for one trip per vessel but the timing is a major concern. If implemented when the EFH action is adopted access could be as early as December 2014. While that would provide catch in FY2014 (Dec2014-Feb2015); that is not an ideal time to be fishing in that area for a variety of reasons, see discussion below under priorities.

In the end the PDT discussed a handful of possible specification alternatives that will be discussed in more detail on a future conference call.

Alternative 1 – No Action. FY2014 default allocations under FW24.

LA FT DAS equivalent to 23 DAS and no access area trips. LAGC IFQ of 2.77 million pounds (1258 mt)

Alternative 2 – One access area trip split over three areas (NL, CA2, and Delmarva)

2b –only access subset of NL in the north (close southern portion to protect small scallops)

Alternative 3 – One access area trip split over three areas (NL, CA2, and Delmarva and include a new scallop access area in and around NL to protect small scallops

Alternative 4 – One access area trip split in two areas (CA2 and Delmarva) and allowed controlled DAS in NL instead

4b – treat all access areas as controlled DAS areas

Alternative 5 – Status Quo – Same level of access as FY2013 (33 DAS and two 13,000 lb rtrips and 2.45 million pounds for LAGC (1111mt).

This is not an actual alternative; it is for analysis purposes only.

LPUE Discussion - As part of the specification discussion the PDT reviewed LPUE data from FY2012 and half of FY2013 to get a better sense of open area catch rates. Currently the model that is used to set DAS is based on an average catch per DAS from the VTR database. The data reviewed by the PDT evaluated catch rates using both VTR data as well as AMS, which is a database at NMFS that is used to calculate “DAS charged”, or the time a vessel crosses the VMS demarcation line. Overall, there is about a 200 pound difference for daily LPUE between the two sources, where LPUE calculated from AMS is typically lower since it does not include steaming time etc. The PDT is planning to change how LPUE is estimated in the projection model to use updated fishery catch data in the AMS database, rather than VTR database. In FW24 the PDT did complete a “sensitivity run” for one of the alternatives that increased LPUE by 10% for open area catch. And that is pretty in line with the LPUE data reviewed based on AMS DAS.

The PDT discussed that there are a subset of vessels with very high catch rates, above 5,000 pounds per DAS. This value seems very high to the PDT under the current regulations. The PDT will further evaluate the average meat weights landed per trip, but concerns were raised that some of these catch rates are still not feasible even if the size of scallops landed were very large (U8-U10).

### ***Other Framework 25 Measures***

- FY2013 CA1 trips – The PDT reviewed the range of alternatives in the document. Concerns were raised about pushing CA1 effort too far into the future because it may not be there, i.e. 2015. However moving effort into open areas and allocating DAS instead could introduce fairness issues since a DAS to one vessel is different than another. If pounds can be allocated in open areas that may be the most preferable in terms of addressing potential fairness issues. It was noted that if the

northern part of CA1 is available as a result of the current EFH action changing the EFH boundaries there would be more scallop biomass available within CA1.

- AMs for SNE/MA windowpane flounder sub-ACL – Staff reported on the method the PDT plans to use to help identify potential AM areas. Observer data will be summarized and expanded to the full fishery to help identify the wp bycatch hotspots. These analyses are not complete yet and the PDT hopes to review preliminary results on the next conference call.
- The PDT is going to continue to work on alternatives for incidental catch target TAC, NGOM hard TAC and assumed catch for state water landings. The NGOM alternatives will likely be No Actin (70,000 pounds) and the same alternative presented by the PDT last year based on updated biomass results (58,000 pounds). It was noted that the NMFS yearend report for FY2012 indicates that some modifications may be warranted. Specifically, current estimates of catch for state water catch and incidental catch are higher than what FMP is assuming.

### ***LAGC IFQ Report***

Staff reviewed the overall areas being covered by the report. Overall there have been major challenges getting the various sources of data in a format that is useful for summarizing trends in this fishery. Therefore, the report will not be complete for the September Council meeting as previously planned. Staff will continue working on the report and either present it to the Council in November or January. The PDT reviewed the leasing section in more detail at this particular meeting. Some specific suggestions were made about how to improve the presentation of results.

The issue of IFQ carryover came up and based on the data presented for 2011 and 2012, the PDT recommends that a sub-ACT be set for the LAGC IFQ fishery to account for uncertainty from carryover. Since 2011 IFQ vessels can carry up to 15% of their annual allocation to the next fishing year. The PDT does not believe that the buffer needs to be the full 15%, but maybe 50% of that amount. If the Committee is interested in considering a range for this the PDT offered: 25%, 50% and 100% of recent carryover amounts (about 200,000 pounds) – thus 50,000, 100,000 and 200,000 pound difference between the LAGC sub-ACL and sub-ACT.

### ***2014 Priorities***

Staff reviewed potential priorities for 2014. The PDT did not identify whether a separate action should be developed in 2014 to address scallop access in and around EFH areas as a results of the Omnibus Amendment, but the PDT did identify a handful of potential issues to consider. Currently the most optimistic timelines for implementation for the EFH action is December 2014 and access scallops in some of the GB closed areas at that time of year has potential issues. First, from a scallop yield perspective December is 20% lower than average yields of scallops harvested in May and June. Under FW16 areas opened in November and it was not a good experience. In addition to lower yields, meat quality from tearing is generally higher in the winter so discarding/highgrading may be higher. Based on VIMS surveys of the Northern edge, there seems to be very strong seasonal differences for older scallops in this area with much better quality in June compared to July.

Second, the area is far offshore and some vessels are less equip to fish there in December. Third, developing and approving an action in the spring/summer would be difficult with other planned activities including the benchmark assessment and the scallop survey methods peer review. Forth, if access is delayed beyond December into the next fishing year it would be advantageous to look at the entire fishing year as a package, and not just access based on changes to the EFH areas. Finally, there may be lobster gear conflict issues to consider.

The PDT is sensitive to the fact that overall catch is relatively low for FY2014 and more scallop catch may be available if EFH areas change. But potentially accessing parts of areas that have been closed for many years needs to be developed carefully. The PDT may want to develop access in these areas very slowly at first on more of an experimental level, and perhaps with higher levels of observer coverage to further evaluate access in areas that have been closed for so long. For example there may be differences in bycatch and scallop mortality from meat quality and other issues.

*The PDT will hold a conference call on September 13, 2013 and have a meeting in early October.*

Figure 1 – Tow from VIMS survey in NL (June 2013)



Figure 2 – Length frequency for NL (note very large value around 20 mm)

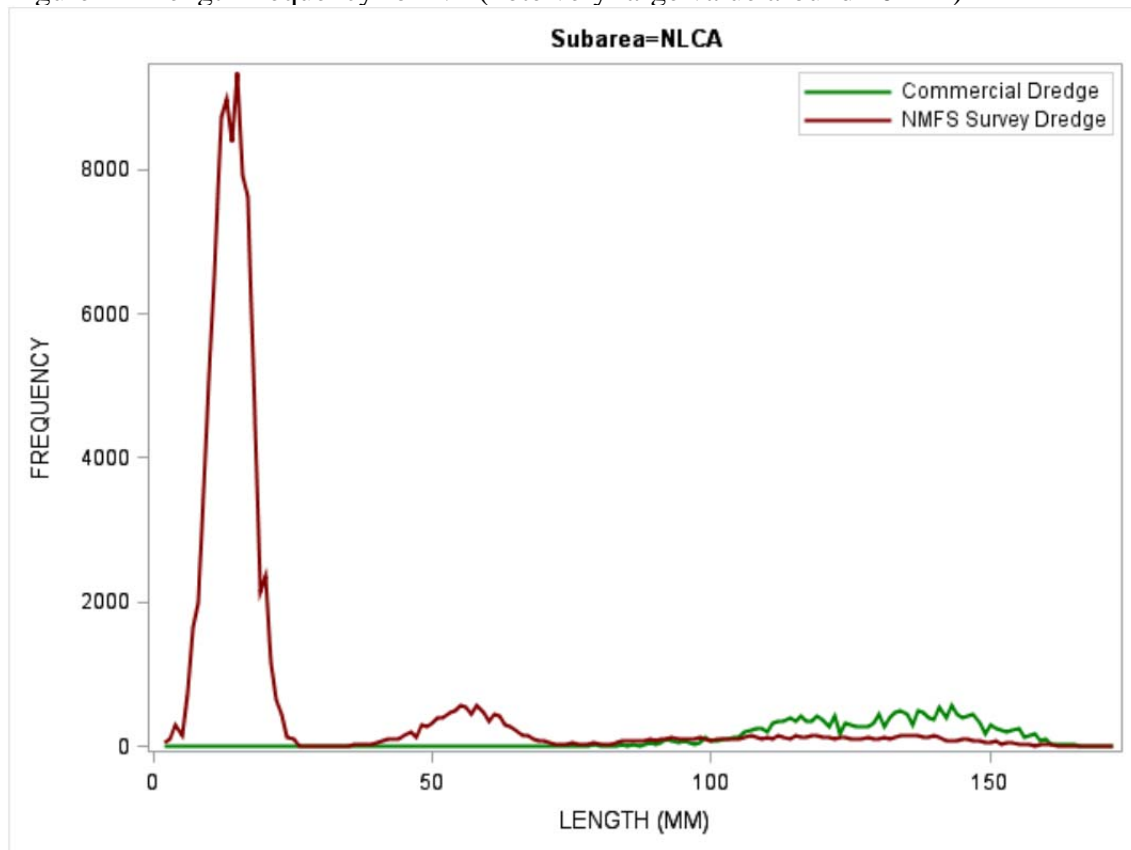




Figure 3 – Abundance of recruit scallops less than 90mm (left) compared to larger scallops above 90 mm (right)

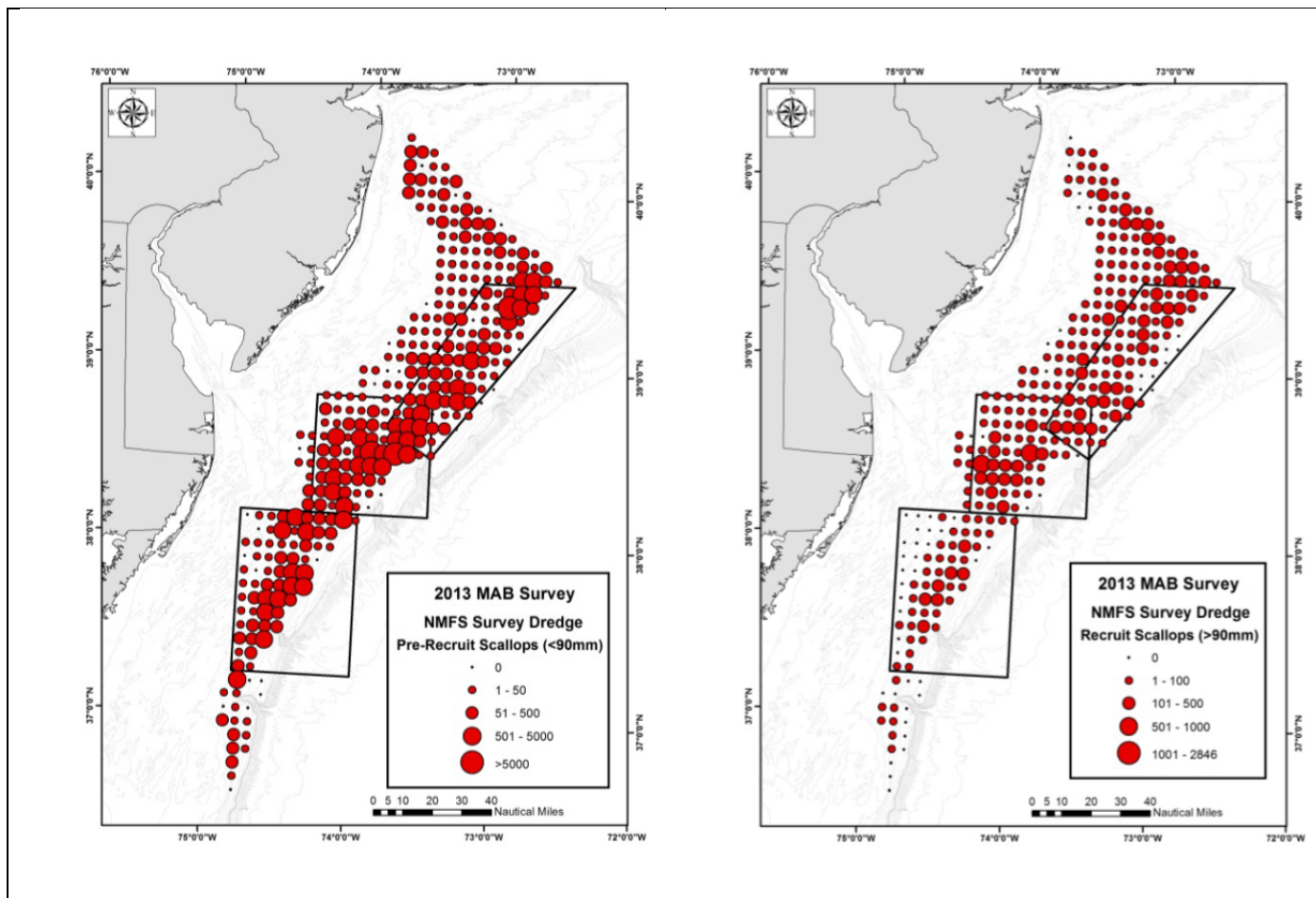


Figure 4 – Shell heights from SMAST survey in Delmarva (top) and CA2 south (bottom)

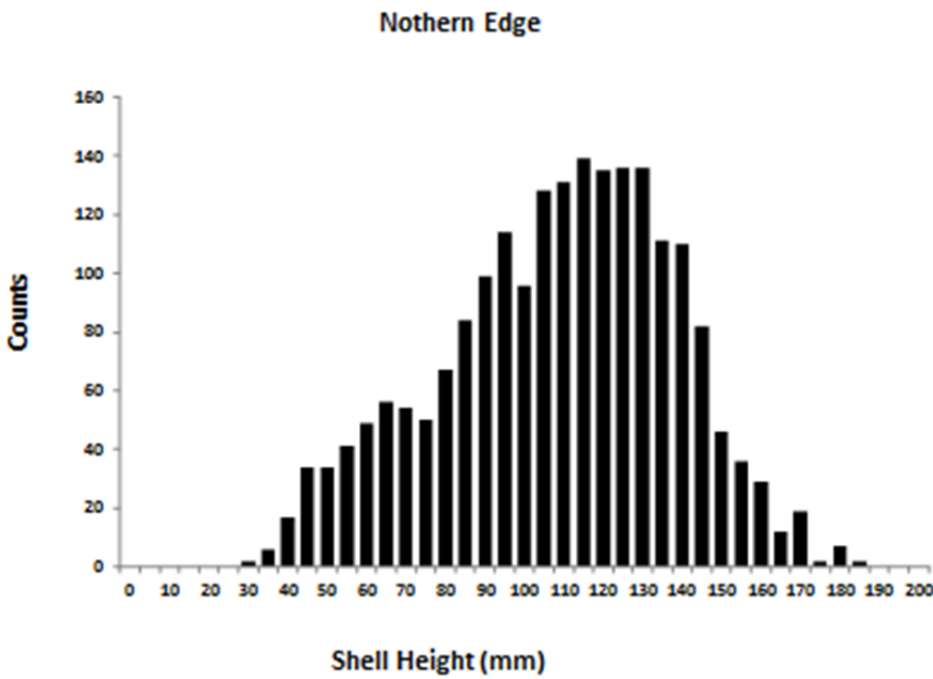
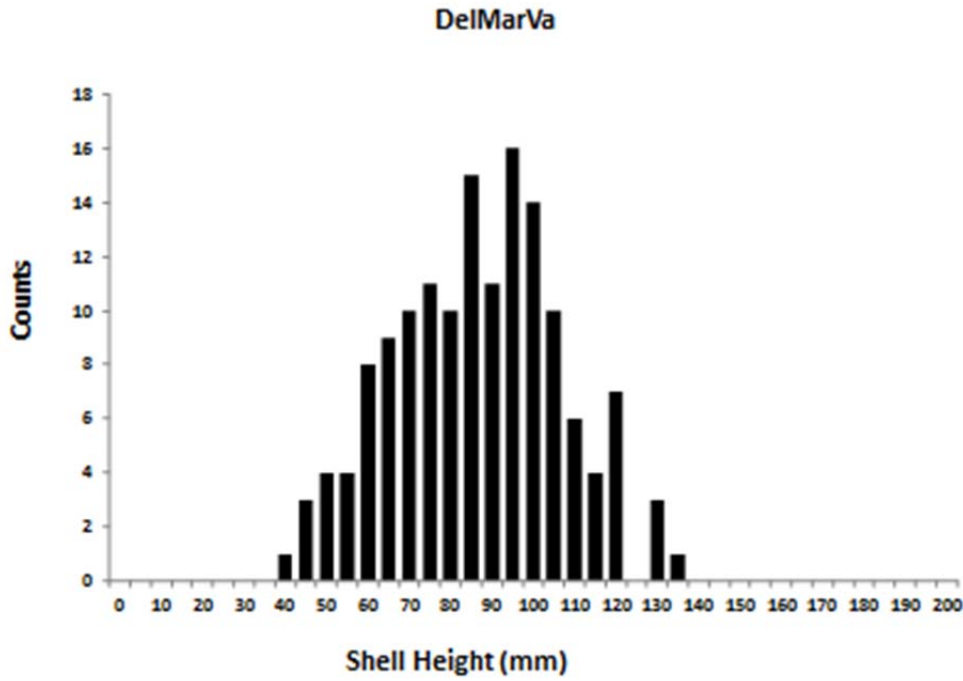
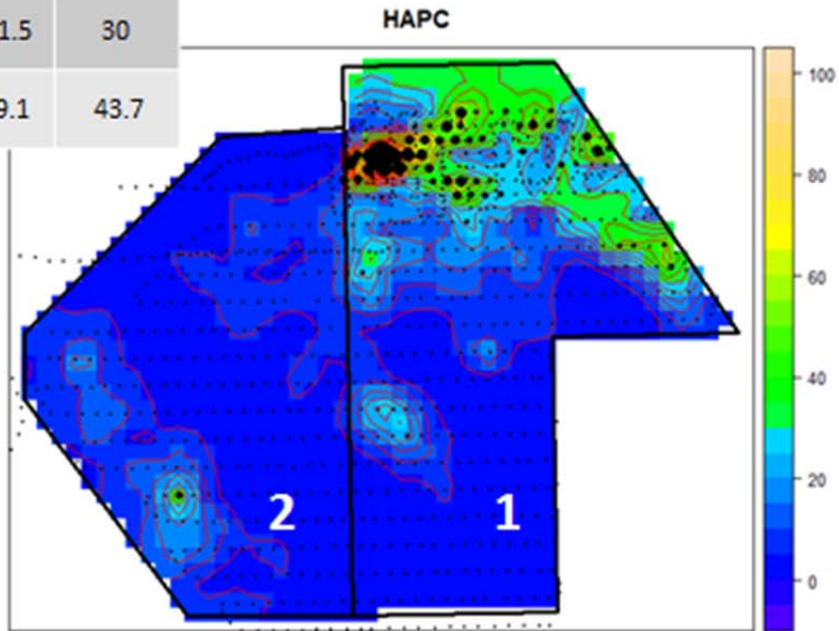


Figure 5 – Biomass estimates from Habcam research team (figures and values were updated after the meeting with revised estimates)

Area	Size (k <sup>2</sup> )	Biomass (mt)	SE
1	633.42	9101.5	30
2	539.29	2709.1	43.7



Area	Size (k <sup>2</sup> )	Biomass (mt)	SE
1	1241.61	3473.9	457.2
2	464.06	575.3	245.7
3	372.77	551.6	205.5
4	363.4	406.7	231.3

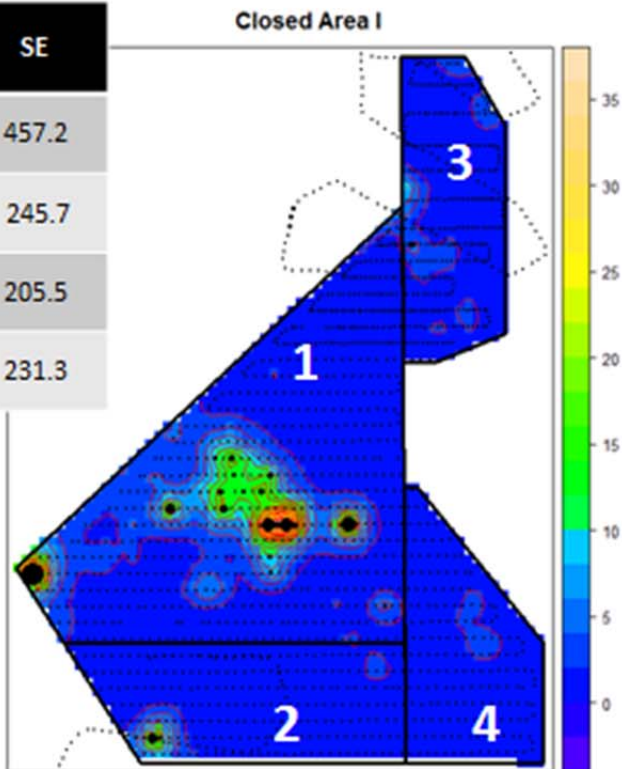


Figure 6 – Abundance of small scallops from NEFSC and VIMS dredge surveys combined (top) and NEFSC and Arnie’s Fisheries Habcam (bottom)

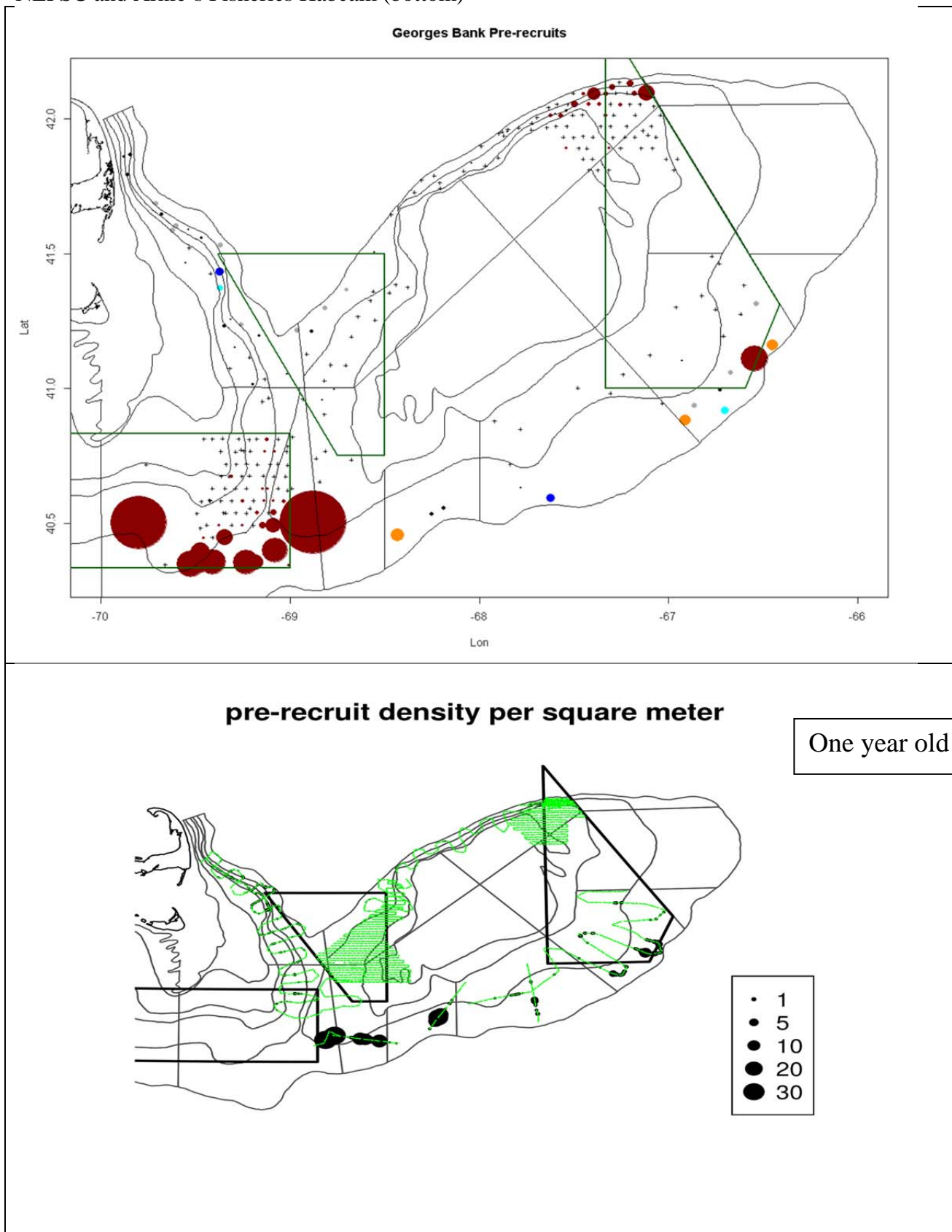


Table 1 – 2013 combined biomass estimates (these values have been slightly updated from the preliminary results presented at the meeting)

<b>Mid-Atlantic Bight</b>	<b>Dredge</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Habcam</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>SMAST</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SE</b>
Hudson Canyon South	7839	1126	7528	831			7684	700
Delmarva	4559	605	6415	781	6249	803	5741	424
Elephant Trunk	14317	1758	19063	1993			16690	1329
Inshore of ET	109	421	868	825			489	463
Virginia Beach	1208	605	395	388			802	359
NYB/LI (includes str 21)	20662	2468	23497	1893			22080	1555
Block Island	N/S	N/S	1655	364			1655	364
TotalMA Rotational	26715	2173	33006	2296			29861	1581
TotalMA Open	21979	2575	24760	2101			23370	1662
<b>Total MidAtlantic</b>	<b>48694</b>	<b>3370</b>	<b>57766</b>	<b>3112</b>			<b>53230</b>	<b>2200</b>
<b>Georges Bank</b>								
Closed Area I Acc	494	108	3340	401			1917	208
Closed Area I NA	16940	5750	4553	747			10747	2899
Closed Area II Acc	5552	1042	3340	1324	5148	1049	4680	662
Closed Area II NA	9041	1220	8497	765			8769	720
NLS Acc	3271	342	4098	584			3685	338
NLS NA	90	28	N/S	N/S			90	28
S Channel	11711	2842	13496	1130			12603	1529
Southern Flank	5704	1197	11445	1946			8575	1142
Northern Edge	4425	580	3160	537			3793	395
Total GB Clsd/Acc	35389	5980	23828	1843			29608	3129
Total GB Open	21840	3138	28101	2313			24970	1949
<b>Total Georges Bank</b>	<b>57229</b>	<b>6754</b>	<b>51929</b>	<b>2958</b>			<b>54858</b>	<b>7922</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105923</b>	<b>7548</b>	<b>109695</b>	<b>4294</b>			<b>108089</b>	<b>8221</b>