



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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New England Fishery Council Reverses Decision on Scallop Rules

PORTSMOUTH, NH Following almost six hours of presentations and discussions, the New England Fishery Management Council in an unprecedented action reversed a November 2009 decision about rules for harvesting sea scallops in 2010. The Council's action will give the east coast scallopers nine more "open area" days-at-sea, along with the four "access area" trips that were also included in the November action. The new action was approved in a 10-5 vote, with two abstentions.

The Council was swayed by elected officials and the testimony of fishermen who presented compelling economic arguments about the importance of profits to their businesses and communities during the next year, in view of the impacts of a serious recession, versus the long-term benefits that are expected to accrue after 2010.

The Council's choice of a 0.20 fishing mortality target in November for 2010 was heavily influenced by the high fishing mortality rates that were estimated to have occurred over the last two years. (Fishing mortality rates represent the percentage of a stock removed by fishing each year.)

Of importance is that a target of 0.20 was also set during 2008-2009, but preliminary Scallop Plan Development Team analyses indicate fishing was occurring at higher rates which are projected to be at or just above the overfishing threshold of 0.29. If the fishing mortality rate is higher than the threshold, overfishing is occurring - an outcome the Council is required to prevent to be consistent with the current federal statute that governs fishing activities.

Council members this month agreed that the risk of overfishing, while higher with the choice approved today, was acceptable in terms of the economic costs associated with the alternative approved in late fall. Both choices were supported scientifically by the Council's Scallop Plan Development Team, a group that provides technical advice to the Council on management actions that address rules that have and will apply to one of the region's most lucrative fishery.

The New England Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils established by federal legislation in 1976, is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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