

BYCATCH CHARACTERIZATION IN THE SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND SEA SCALLOP FISHERY

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

To cover the full spectrum of the Limited Access General Category (LAGC) scallop fishery, four vessels out of Point Judith, RI (F/V Mister G, F/V Harvest Moon, F/V Foxy Lady, and F/V Brooke C) and one vessel out of Montauk, NY (F/V New Species) are being used to characterize the bycatch in the Southern New England (SNE) sea scallop fishery. These vessels are fishing using standard fishing practices and methods. The areas fished are determined by the captain and are consistent with areas fished in day to day fishing operations.

Sea sampling started at the end of June 2012. To date, 20 trips have been sampled with a total of 132 dredge hauls (Figure 1). All trips were conducted south of Block Island with 45 conducted to the southwest and 87 to the southeast.

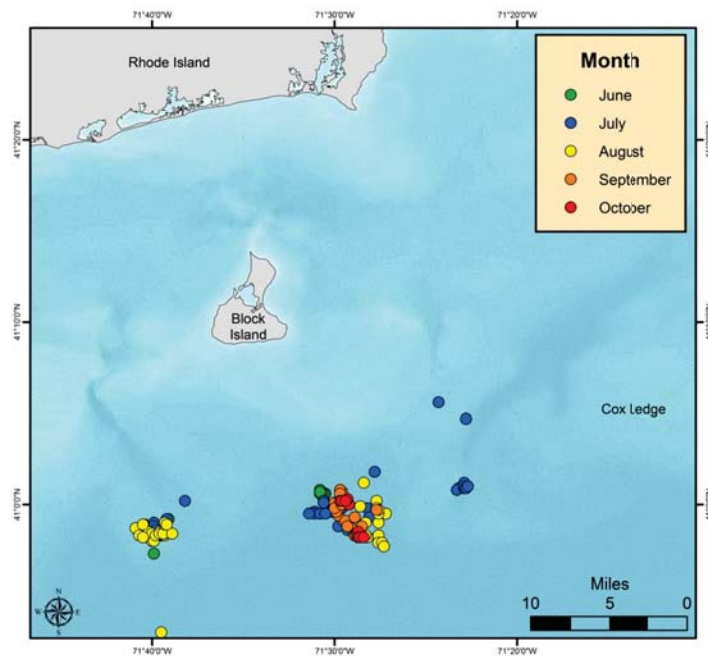


Figure 1. Location of sea scallop sampling trips broken out by month.

A total of 9 days have been sampled on the F/V Mister G, 5 days on the F/V Harvest Moon, 4 days on the F/V Brooke C, and 2 days on the F/V New Species.

Total weights of each species captured were recorded. Sea scallop weights were recorded as shell weight and then converted to meat weight using the conversion factor of 8.33 (Deidre Boelke, NEFMC, personal communication, October 23, 2012). Lengths for finfish species as well as sea scallops were taken.

Sea scallop was 35% of the catch composition when all data was combined. Skate was the highest proportion at 46% with little skate and winter skate consisting of almost 94% of all the skate caught (64 and 30%, respectively). Flounder bycatch was low for all species caught with yellowtail and windowpane flounder at 0.5% each of total catch.

Sea scallop meat weight ranged from 1.1 to 150.9 pounds per tow with a mean catch weight of 70.9 pounds per tow (Table 1, Figure 2). Other species can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean catch per tow of scallops and other species in 20 trips including the minimum and maximum values.

Species	Catch per Tow (lbs)		
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Sea Scallop (meats)	70.9	1.1	150.9
Yellowtail Flounder	1.7	0.3	20.0
Summer Flounder	7.7	1.2	27.0
Winter Flounder	2.2	0.1	22.0
Windowpane Flounder	2.6	0.3	8.4
Witch Flounder	1.1	1.1	1.1
Fourspot Flounder	1.0	0.1	3.8
Sanddab Flounder	5.4	0.4	22.0
Gulfstream Flounder	0.3	0.1	0.8
Skate NK	7.0	0.0	27.0
Little Skate	59.7	6.0	150.0
Winter Skate	28.1	0.0	437.0
Barndoor Skate	1.6	0.9	2.2
Monkfish	14.7	1.0	67.8

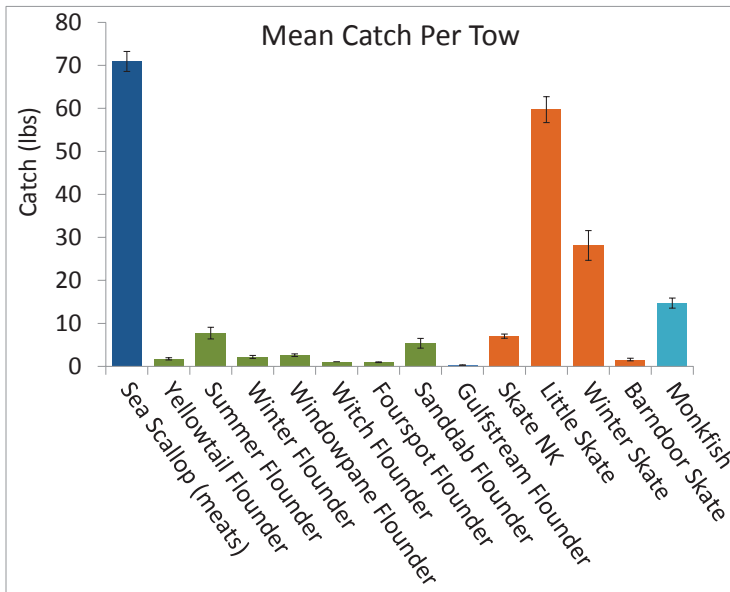


Figure 2. Mean catch per tow of scallops and other species in 20 trips sampled on board LAGC vessels.

Scallop catches were generally higher in the southeast area with 55% of the catch per tow above the mean of 70.9 lbs compared to 9% in the southwest area (Figure 3).

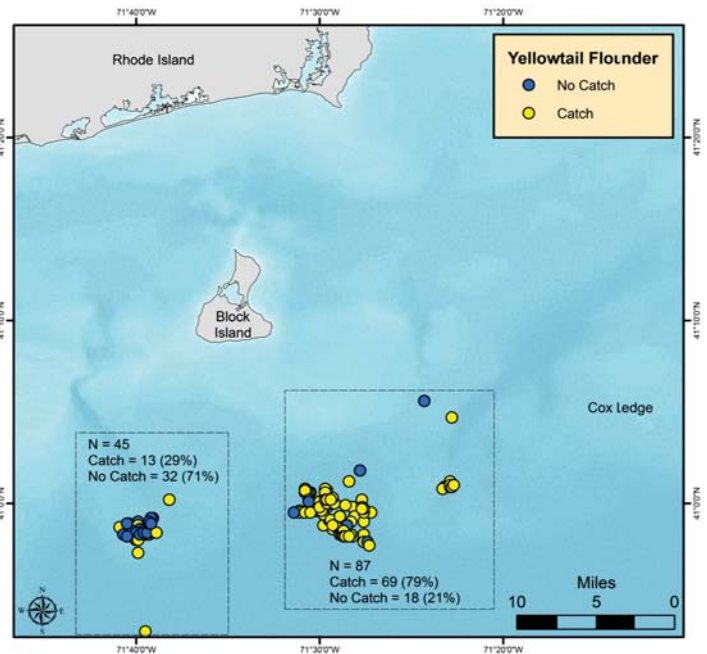


Figure 4. Yellowtail flounder catch per trip; blue indicates no catch, yellow indicates catch in haul.

Mean total skate per tow was 93.9 lbs. Distribution of the catch of skate was similar to scallops and yellowtail flounder with higher levels of catches found in the southeast area (Figure 5).

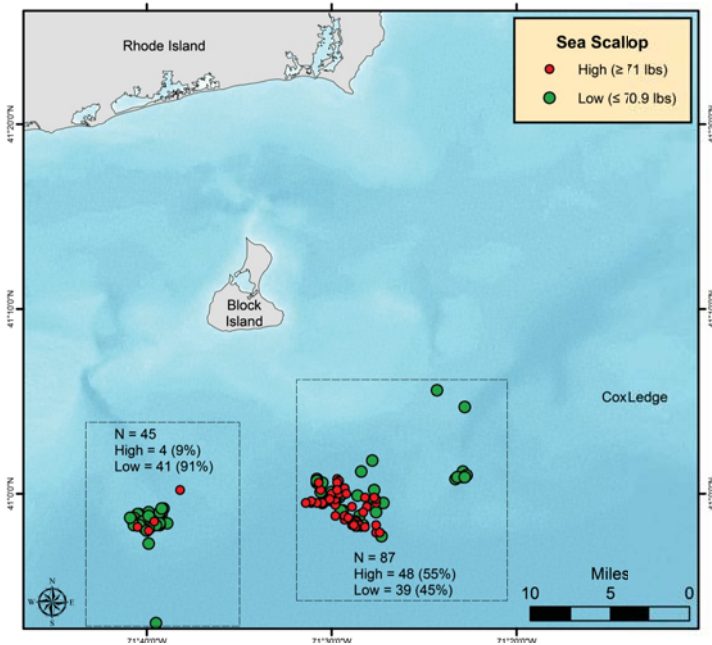


Figure 3. Sea scallop catch per trip, scale based on mean catch per tow of 70.9 lbs.

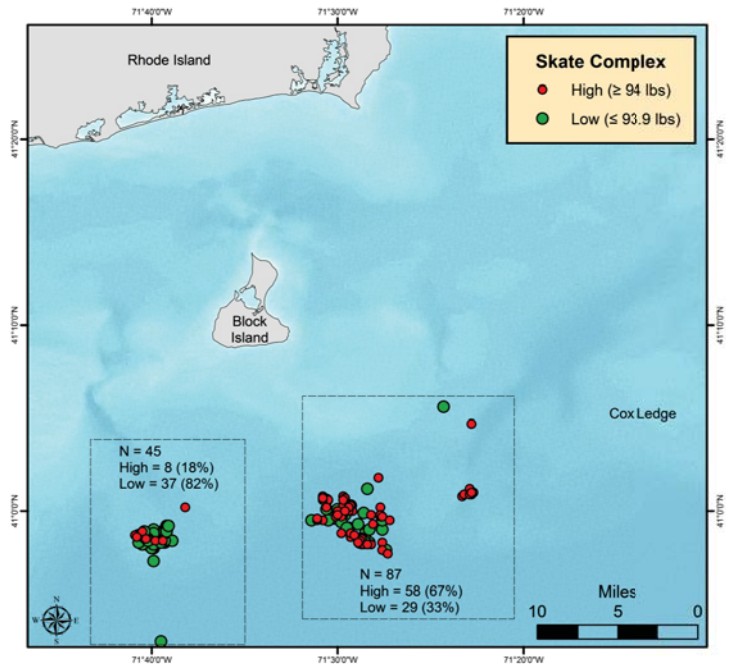


Figure 5. Skate catch per trip, scale based on mean catch per tow of 93.9 lbs. Note: skate is all species of skate combined.

Yellowtail flounder bycatch was low and ranged from 0.3 to 20.0 lbs per tow with a mean of 1.7 (Table 1, Figure 2). Distribution of yellowtail flounder bycatch was higher in the southeast with 79% of the hauls conducted having a bycatch of yellowtail flounder compared to 29% in the southwest (Figure 4).

WHAT'S NEXT

Sampling will continue through June 2013 with a goal of completing 75 trips total.