



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Fishery Council Approves Sea Scallop Management Rules and Important Sea Turtle Conservation Measures

NEWBURYPORT, MA The New England Fishery Management Council finalized scallop fishery management measures for 2010 at its late fall meeting in Newport, RI this week. Framework Adjustment 21 to the Scallop Fishery Management Plan will continue the successful management of the scallop resource through the use of an innovative program that employs area rotation along with specific measures in defined geographic “access” areas to control levels of fishing. The action represents a reduction in catch to ensure that the scallop resource is fished at sustainable levels.

Allocations for 2010 will include four access area trips. Two scallop trips will be allowed in the Elephant Trunk Access Area and one in the Delmarva Access Area --- both off the Mid-Atlantic coast; and one in the Nantucket Lightship Access Area located south of Nantucket. Twenty-nine days-at-sea per vessel will be allocated to full-time scallop vessels fishing in the “open areas”, fishing grounds outside of the access areas. Forty percent of that will be reserved for part-time vessels and 8.33% for vessels in the occasional permit category. These measures were developed using a Council-approved fishing mortality target, or level of fishing that allows roughly 16 percent of the commercially-sized scallops to be harvested.

Framework 21 also includes measures to comply with the recent finding prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service that requires limited scallop fishing in areas and during the time of year when sea turtle distribution overlaps with scallop fishing activities. To reduce the risk of interactions, the Council selected a September-October closure of the Delmarva Access Area, as well as a restriction on the number of access area trips that can be taken in either the Delmarva or the Elephant Trunk Access Areas between June 15 and August 31. The outcome, with only two of the three available access area trips allowed in the Mid Atlantic areas during the period in which turtles are likely to be present, is expected to result in a shift of a portion of the projected fishing activities to other areas and/or times of year when turtles are less likely to be encountered.

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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