



Peter K. Pryor



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New England Fishery Management Council

The New England Fishery Management Council is charged with conserving and managing fishery resources from three to 200 miles off the Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut coastline. Its jurisdiction extends to fishing grounds in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank, and in southern New England. The New England Council develops fishing regulations that affect both large and small-scale commercial and recreational fishing.

The Council has implemented nine fishery management plans: a Northeast Multispecies plan for cod, haddock, flounder and other groundfish species; a Small Mesh Multispecies plan for whiting and hake fisheries; a Northeast Skate Complex plan that includes seven species of skates; as well as plans for Sea Scallops, Atlantic Herring, Red Crab, and Atlantic Salmon. Monkfish and Spiny Dogfish plans are prepared jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Council.

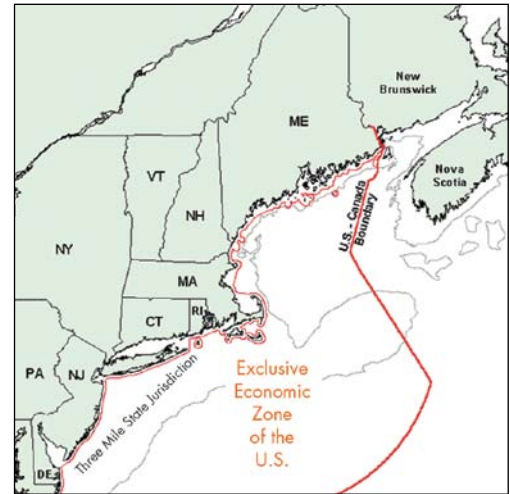
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Opportunities & Challenges

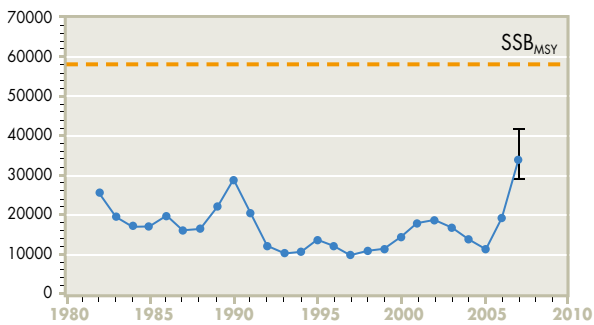
The New England Council will address an ambitious set of priorities over the next several years to meet the requirements of the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act and significantly improve its management programs. Specifically, the Council will develop annual catch limits and accountability measures, adopt a catch share-based management program in the groundfish fishery, protect vulnerable habitat areas, improve overall economic performance in the fisheries, and prepare an ecosystem-based fishery management plan.



Implementing a catch share program for groundfish

The Council currently is working to expand the catch share program for the multispecies groundfish fishery. Implemented in 2004 for New England's cod fishery, the program successfully controlled catch while providing participants with a direct role in management decision-making.

Gulf of Maine Cod Summary Stock Status



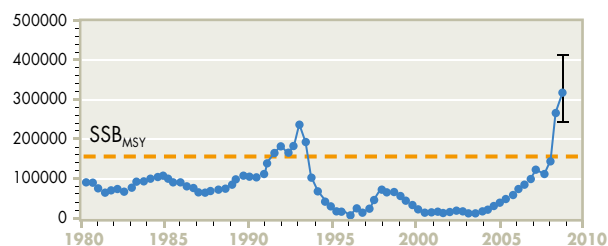
Similar to a harvesting cooperative, each sector in the catch share program — a group that defines itself by gear type, area, target species or other criteria — will receive an allocation of the total allowable catch limit for stocks in the groundfish complex. The sectors themselves will address the internal allocation of fish among members, providing greater flexibility for fishermen to decide how to fish most efficiently. A catch share program will benefit struggling fishing businesses and coastal communities in New England, particularly during the transition period when groundfish catch limits are set low and stocks are rebuilding.

When fully rebuilt, these same groundfish stocks should produce nearly triple the current catches. Managing a rebuilt fishery will present different challenges as the Council balances the need to protect weak or vulnerable stocks, while maximizing the harvest of abundant stocks such as haddock and redfish.



Peter K. Phylbot

Georges Bank Haddock Summary Stock Status



Generating Jobs and Value from Scallop Fisheries

The sea scallop resource off New England is currently at historic high levels. Each of the last five years has produced scallop landings in excess 50 million pounds annually. The spectacular recovery of the scallop resource is the result of an innovative program developed by the Council to control the level of fishing. The program rotates access to harvest areas, similar to crop rotation for farms, to enhance scallop productivity. Coupled with specific rules for other areas, fishing is carefully monitored to maximize revenues while preventing overfishing.

The productivity of the resource has allowed not only an increase in landings, but in the number of active full-time vessels — from 220 to 345 between 1994 and 2007. Generating well over \$300 million in revenues in 2007, scallop landings have propelled New Bedford, Massachusetts to the position of number one port in the nation for value of landings for the last eight years.

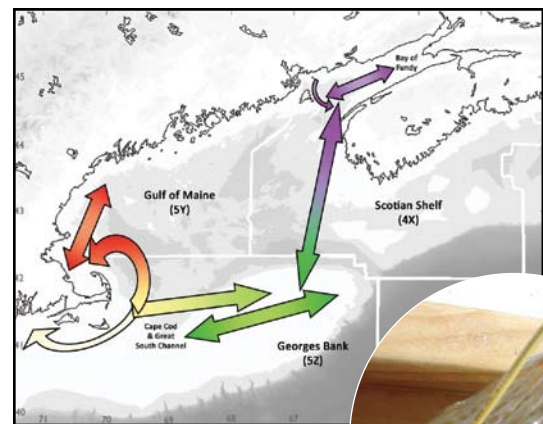
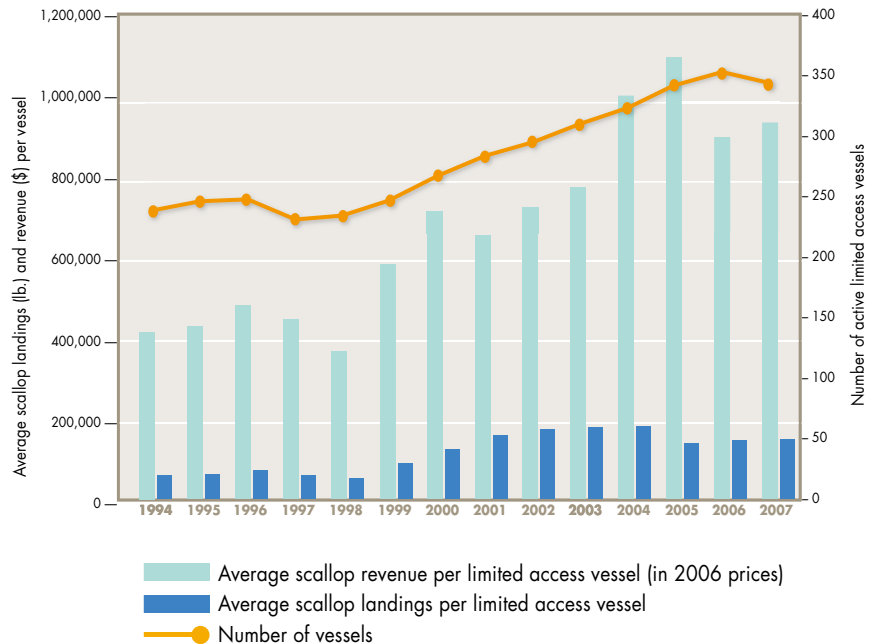
Even with the sea scallop resource at historically high levels, challenges remain. Scallop fishing on Georges Bank is constrained not by the amount of scallops available, but by a cap on the bycatch of yellowtail flounder. While solutions are under development, there also are concerns about the interactions between scallop gear and threatened and endangered sea turtles in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Developing Innovative Solutions Through Research

Maintaining sustainable fisheries and healthy fishing communities requires good decision-making as well as sound science and adequate information systems. For example, implementing catch limits will require more frequent stock assessments, the development of improved analytical tools, and the implementation of effective monitoring programs to determine total catch and discard levels.

As a way to address these needs, the Council developed research set-asides — a percentage of the total allowable catch limit — for its scallop, herring and monkfish fisheries to provide funding for cooperative research projects. In these programs, fishermen partner with scientists to answer questions of mutual interest and address management questions.

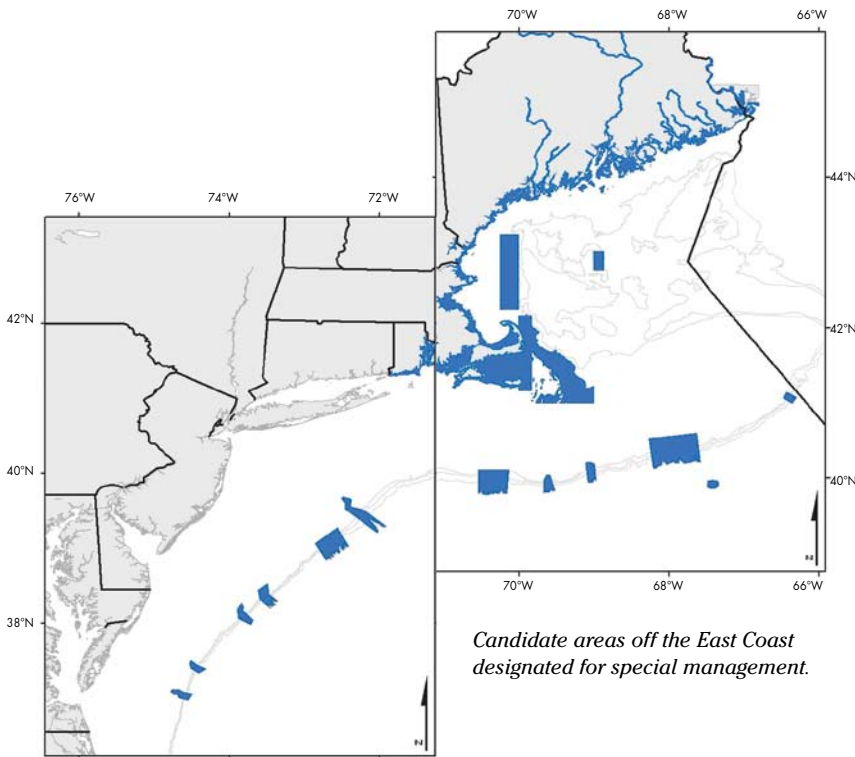
Scallop Landings and Revenue



"Migration highways" for cod in the Gulf of Maine region.

Shelley Tallack, Gulf of Maine Research Institute

Cooperative research has led to the development of gear modifications that reduce groundfish bycatch and effectively lower the risks of encounters with turtles in the scallop fishery. Cooperative research funds also have supported scallop, groundfish, and monkfish industry-based surveys, tagging programs, habitat assessments and a range of important gear modifications that have directly contributed to improved fisheries management.



Protecting Vulnerable Habitat

The New England Council recently completed the first phase of a thorough habitat evaluation and conservation status review. Essential fish habitat designations were updated with detailed scientific descriptions of each managed species life-stage. The Council also designated special status to 18 areas off the east coast that may need additional levels of protection because they serve an important ecological function, are sensitive to environmental degradation and development, or are uncommon in this region. These areas include offshore canyons on Georges Bank and in the Mid-Atlantic, and areas of the Great South Channel and the inshore Gulf of Maine that are important to juvenile cod. The final phase of the habitat review will include analytical approaches for assessing the level and spatial extent of adverse impacts due to fishing activities, and provide increased habitat protection where it is most needed.

Working Towards Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management

The New England Council will begin developing a fishery ecosystem plan in 2010. The plan will provide a comprehensive source of information that would apply across fishery management plans. This holistic approach will allow the Council to make informed decisions that not only support sustainable fish populations, but also the health and general productivity of our oceans.



Challenges associated with developing an ecosystem-based fishery management plan will include the development of indicators of ecosystem health and predictive models to demonstrate ecosystem dynamics, useful assessments of non-fishing impacts and competing uses, and the establishment of appropriate linkages between impacts and productivity.