

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 4, 2020

Thomas A. Nies
Executive Director
New England Fishery Management Council
50 Water Street, Mill 2
Newburyport, MA 01950

Re: Atlantic Sea Scallop Amendment 21 Public Hearing Comment

Dear Director Nies:

I write to you to comment on the Amendment 21 to the scallop fishery management plan and in strong support of the preferred alternatives that were selected by the Council this spring. I urge the Council vote in support of these alternatives.

As a representative for and resident of Maine who cares deeply about the working waterfront and Maine's fishing communities, this action is incredibly important to protect access to the scallop fishery for Maine's fishermen. While Maine is known for our lobsters, many of our small boats participate in a variety of fisheries throughout the year. Scallops are a very important part of that diversification for our fishermen, and the federal scallop fishery is an opportunity for those who traditionally fish in the Gulf of Maine that we must protect, steward, and preserve. For the first time in a long time, scallops are rebuilding in the Gulf of Maine. The return of scallops to federal waters offers a fantastic opportunity for Maine's fleet.

The issue of greatest importance in Amendment 21 for many of us is in the allocation split. The Council chose Alternative 2 Option 2 as their preferred alternative. This choice would create a set-aside trigger of 600,000 pounds. Pounds over the trigger would be split 25% for the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) set-aside and 75% for the NGOM Annual Projected Landing (APL) up to three million pounds, then 5% for the NGOM set-aside and 95% for the NGOM APL. This would allow small, inshore boats access while the biomass is low, but all vessels would be able to fish once the biomass grows to a size that can support the larger fleet. This option provides adequate access and represents a compromise that will support a sustainable fishery.

This action has the potential to be one of the most impactful decision points that will impact the Maine scallop fleet for years to come. I urge the Council to support fair and equitable access for Maine fishermen to the scallop resource in the Gulf of Maine.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress