



NOAA FISHERIES

Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Industry-Funded Scallop (IFS) Observer Program

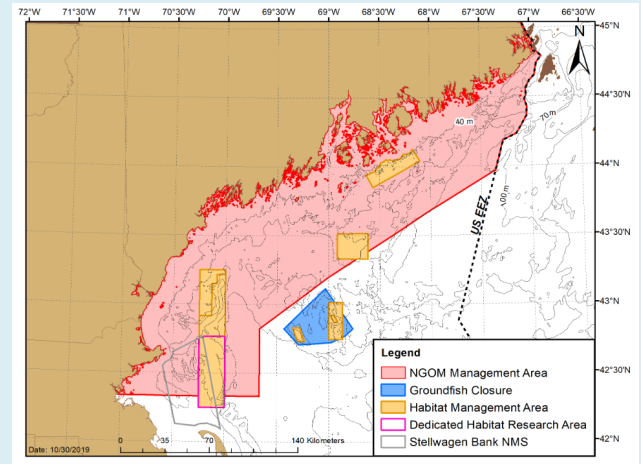


Federal monitoring of the Northern Gulf of Maine scallop fishery Reminder for fishing year 2023

Regulatory status and IFS observer program

Amendment 21 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan was published in the Federal Register on January 12, 2022. Amendment 21 includes management measures for the directed scallop fishery in the federal waters of the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area (see map) and was implemented at the start of the 2022 scallop fishing year. These measures will continue for fishing year 2023 (beginning April 1, 2023).

All vessels active in the directed scallop fishery in the federal waters of the NGOM are required to participate in the Industry-Funded Scallop (IFS) observer program, operated by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. Compensation to help support observer coverage will be available.



The Northern Gulf of Maine Management Area relative to groundfish closures, habitat management areas, and the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. (Source: Amendment 21 Final Submission, Aug 13, 2021).

IFS call-in requirement and notification of selection for coverage

Limited Access General Category (LAGC)-NGOM scallop fishery vessels are required to call the automated interactive voice response (IVR) phone system to declare their intent to fish and participate in the IFS program. Vessels will need to call the IVR at least 72 hours prior to the start of the calendar week (i.e., by Thursday prior to the Sunday to Saturday week they intend to sail). Within 24 hours after calling the IVR, the vessel representative will receive an email via the vessel monitoring system (VMS) indicating either that the vessel was selected to carry an observer, or that the vessel was waived of observer coverage. If selected for coverage, the vessel representative will need to contact IFS service provider companies at least 48 hours prior to the start of the trip to arrange for observer deployment.

Important phone numbers

Scallop IVR call-in system:	(508) 495-2100
Vessel call-in coordinator and IFS support:	(508) 560-3550
IFS service providers:	
A.I.S. Inc.	(774) 200-1688
East West Technical Services, Inc.	(860) 910-4957
Fathom Resources, LLC.	(508) 990-0997

Detailed instructions are available online at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/commercial-fishing/industry-funded-scallop-observer-program-call-guide>

What are vessel safety requirements I must meet to carry an observer?

All vessels planning to take part in the NGOM scallop fishery need to comply with U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and observer program safety and emergency preparedness standards. All vessels must have:

- A current USCG Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Examination decal, regardless of vessel size.
 - Visit www.fishsafe.info for more information regarding the USCG decal and maritime safety for commercial fishing vessels.
- Personal floatation devices/immersion suits
- Ring buoys
- Distress signals
- Fire extinguishing equipment
- Emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB)
- Survival craft with sufficient capacity to accommodate the total number of crew and the observer.



Duties of an IFS observer

IFS observers monitor sea scallop dredge and trawl trips to inform the conservation and management of the Atlantic sea scallop fishery. Specifically, IFS observers record information about the trip (e.g., price of fuel, VTR number), gear (e.g., frame type, ring sizes, number of chains), and tow, such as depth, water temperature, and time and location of each tow. IFS observers collect data on all kept and discarded catch including species, weight, and reason kept or discarded. They record specific sea scallop information such as shell heights, and meat weight and volume, and take biological samples (e.g., otolith) of priority species. They also document interactions with marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds, and other protected species. Data collected by IFS observers are valuable to understand the commercial scallop fishery, evaluate sea scallop health and distribution, support stock assessments, reduce bycatch, recover protected species, and support sustainable fisheries management. Observers are encouraged to communicate with and be respectful of the captain, crew, and ongoing fishing activity while performing their duties.

What are the captain's responsibilities when carrying an observer?

- Ensure the vessel adheres to U.S. Coast Guard safety standards.
- Allow the observer to perform IFS observer duties safely and effectively, and collaborate when needed.
- Provide the observer reasonable accommodation (i.e., access to living quarters, amenities, storage).

For more information or questions contact:

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