

## Monitoring of Yellowtail Flounder Catch in Scallop Access Areas

### Background

This document summarizes the methodology for monitoring the yellowtail flounder (YTF) catch within scallop access areas for the 2011 fishing year (FY). The YTF catch allocation for the Georges Bank (GB) access areas for FY 2011 is 306,000 lbs. If the GB YTF access area allocation is reached, the Closed Area I and Closed Area II scallop access areas will close to all vessels fishing for scallops for the remainder of FY 2011. Updates on the status of FY 2011 YTF catch within GB scallop access areas can be found at:

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/scal.htm>.

### Data

In order to monitor YTF catch in access areas, the Northeast Region's Analysis and Program Support Division (APS) relies on a number of sources of data. The data sources used to monitor YTF catch during FY 2011 are summarized below, with particular attention to the timeframe over which the data becomes available for monitoring purposes.

*Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Data.* The Northeast Fishery Observer Program (NEFOP) collects and processes data and biological samples obtained during commercial fishing trips. Preliminary (partially audited) observer data is available to APS for monitoring purposes within 24 hours of the end of the observed fishing trip. Fully audited data are usually available within 90 days of the end of an observed trip.

*Federal Dealer Data.* Federally permitted dealers are required to submit reports that document, among other things, the weight of each species purchased from vessels during a given reporting week, which ends on Saturday at midnight. Reports are submitted through the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS), and are due by midnight on the first Tuesday following the reporting week ending date. These reports are available to APS upon submission.

*Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Catch Reports.* The daily VMS catch report is required for all scallop trips for limited access (LA) and limited access general category (LAGC) individual fishing quota (IFQ) scallop vessels. Each of these vessels must report YTF caught (kept and discarded) and all other species kept. Each vessel is required to submit VMS catch reports daily by 9:00AM of the day following the day on which fishing occurred, consistent with access area catch reporting.

#### **Observer coverage**

The Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) allocates observer sea days to monitor bycatch in commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast, from Maine to North Carolina through the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology (SBRM) process. For more information on the targeted FY 2011 observer coverage levels in the scallop fishery, see the permit holder letter dated [February 18, 2011](#).

## YTF catch estimation

YTF catch in Closed Area I and Closed Area II will be monitored using the cumulative methodology (the same method that was used to monitor YTF catch in the Nantucket Lightship Access Area in FY 2010). The YTF discard rate will be calculated as the ratio of observed YTF discards (lbs) to the observed kept catch of all species (lbs) on observed scallop trips. A separate rate will be calculated for the LA and LAGC IFQ fleets. Total YTF discards (lbs) for each fleet will be estimated by multiplying the respective discard rate by the dealer reported year-to-date total kept of all species (lbs) on all scallop trips for that fleet. Note that VMS catch reports will be used until dealer data becomes available for a specific trip<sup>1</sup>. The total YTF catch for each fleet is then calculated by adding the total YTF discards to the dealer reported year-to-date YTF kept on all scallop trips for that fleet.

The formula for estimating total YTF catch is:

$$\left( \frac{\text{Observed YTF discards}}{\text{Observed kept all}} \times \text{Dealer kept all} \right) + \text{Dealer kept YTF} = \text{Total YTF catch}$$

A transition method will be applied at the beginning of the year when there is less than five observed scallop trips to reliably estimate the YTF discard rate. The transition method starts with historical YTF discard data (called the assumed rate), which will be updated as in-season discard data becomes available. For Closed Area I, the annual YTF discard rate from FY 2007 will be used as the assumed discard rate in FY 2011; for Closed Area II, the annual YTF discard rate from FY 2009 will be used as the assumed discard rate in FY 2011. The transition to the in-season rate occurs as data from observed trips 1 – 4 becomes available. Once data for observed trip number 5 becomes available the transition to the in-season data is complete. From that point forward only in-season data is used to calculate the discard rate.

The formula for the transition rate is:

$$\left( \frac{0.7}{\text{Trip count}} \right) \times \text{Assumed rate} + \left( 1 - \left( \frac{0.7}{\text{Trip count}} \right) \right) \times \text{In-Season rate}$$

In this formula, trip count is 1 – 4. This method is currently being used to estimate discard rates for the Northeast multispecies fishery. For more information on the peer-review of the cumulative methodology visit: <http://nefsc.noaa.gov/groundfish/discard/>.

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<sup>1</sup> In previous fishing years, if VMS catch report data were available for a trip but dealer data were not, the VMS catch reports of YTF kept were proportioned to dealer equivalent weight by a factor of 1.07. This was based on an analysis of FY 2007 groundfish trips. A recent analysis of FY 2010 scallop trips indicated that this calculation had a negligible impact on real-time monitoring. Thus, VMS catch reports are no longer being proportioned to dealer equivalent weights.