Overview of the New England Council's RSA Programs

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Mackerel Committee Report

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

June 21, 2022

Today's Discussion

- General Overview of New England's RSA programs, with emphasis on program elements & examples from the Scallop RSA program.

- Observations and Lessons Learned.

Objectives of the Research Set-Aside

- Conduct research that is important to the Council and stakeholders.
- Enhance understanding of the species, bycatch, key issues.
- Support management and decision making.

Program Genesis

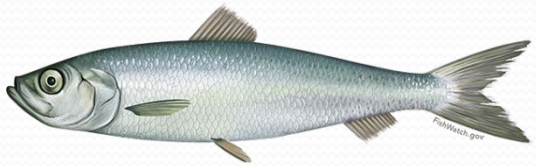
How New England's RSA was born

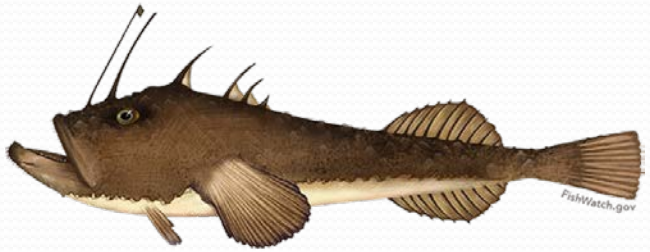
From controversy and finger pointing,
to cooperation and successful fisheries management.

- 1994 - Large areas on Georges Bank closed to protect groundfish.
- Depleted scallop fishing grounds quickly recovered - amount of harvestable scallops and areas of low bycatch were unknown.
- 1998 - Cooperative Surveys paid for with scallops to survey key areas.
- 1999 - Closed area access trips authorized, scallops paid for observers.
- 2004 - Scallop RSA program expanded, and following a successful cooperative survey.

Program Genesis

NEFMC's RSA Programs



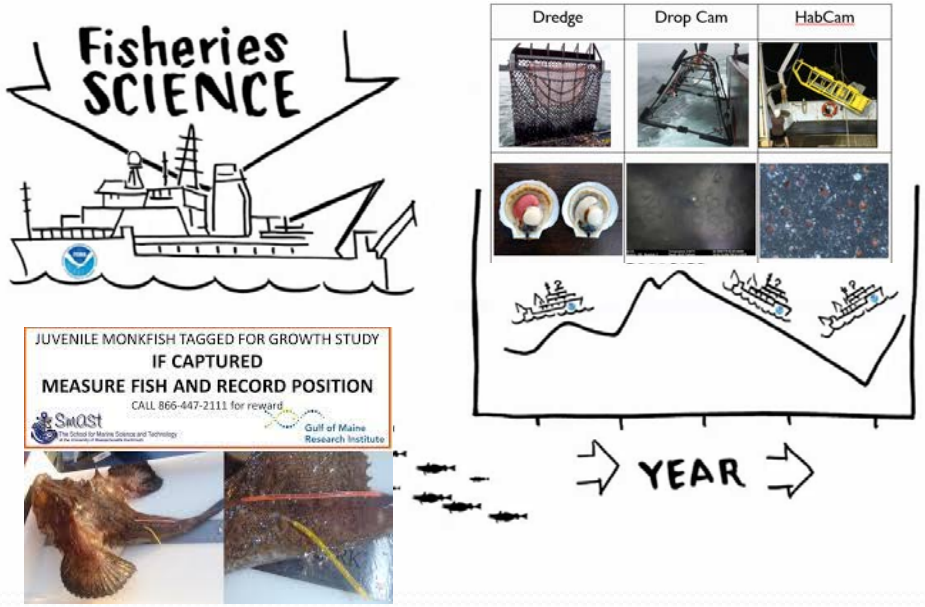


- Three FMPs with RSA programs – scallops, monkfish, herring.
- Program scale varies by FMP – scallops largest and most active.
- Challenges and opportunities with all three programs.

Program Outcomes

What kind of research is funded? How is it used in management?

- **Sea Scallops**
  - Resource Surveys (largest funding source, over 40% of funds)
  - Gear research to reduce bycatch of finfish,
  - Interactions between scallop fishery and turtles,
  - Scallop biology and life history research
- **Monkfish-** most recently, investigation of stock structure through tagging.
- **Atlantic Herring-** monitoring landings for river herring avoidance.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 25, 2019

PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante
(607) 592-4817, jplante@nefmc.org

Atlantic Herring: 2019-2021 Research Set-Aside Award Supports Bycatch Avoidance in Midwater Trawl Fishery

Program Elements: Who's involved?

Genesis & Priority Setting → Grant Making & Administration → Research

New England Fishery Management Council

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
NOAA
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

RESEARCH SET ASIDE
Investing in our fisheries since 1999

Priority Setting → Grant Making & Administration → Research

- Council recommends RSA priorities to NOAA Fisheries.
- Input from technical group, Advisory Panel, and Committees.
- Priorities generally ranked in order of importance.
- Feedback loop begins with "Share Day" to learn about how funded work is proceeding, determine research needs.
- First and best opportunity for Council to steer trajectory of program → NOAA uses Council's ranking, priorities to guide grantmaking decisions.

Priority Setting

Solicitation Process

New England Fishery Management Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 14, 2020

PRESS CONTACT: Janice Plante
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Scallop RSA Program: Time to Submit Applications for 2021-2022 Awards Based on Council Research Priorities

NOAA Fisheries has begun soliciting proposals for research projects to be carried out under the 2021-2022 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. The submission deadline is October 12, 2020.

Proposals should respond to the research priorities established by the New England Fishery Management Council. During its June 2020 webinar meeting, the Council determined that resource surveys should be the highest priority for the next round of RSA awards.

- The Council also identified a number of "high" and "general research" priorities, which are summed up in the table below.
- Details about all of the priorities are spelled out in this section of the Federal Funding Opportunity.

The Scallop RSA Program is a joint effort between the Council, which manages the scallop fishery and sets research priorities, and NOAA Fisheries, which administers the competition, oversees awarded projects, and oversees set-aside harvest activities.

Research set-aside programs support a wide range of projects, and many of them help inform management decisions. Proposals are evaluated for scientific merit and relevance to fishery management.

Questions? *Contact NOAA's Ryan Silva at ryan.silva@noaa.gov*

Scallop RSA Projects – Work Worth Sharing

See for yourself. Important research is conducted each year through this valuable industry-funded program.

- Here are recent projects presented during this spring's RSA Share Day.

2021-2022 Scallop Research Set-Aside Program Priorities

#	HIGHEST PRIORITY (1a, 1b, 1c)	#	GENERAL RESEARCH (4, 5, & 6 - not ranked)
1a	Intensive surveys of access areas	4	Scallop recruitment supplementation
1b	Intensive surveys of areas of interest and the Gulf of Maine		
1c	Broadscale surveys of Georges Bank and the Mid-Atlantic	5	Bycatch: Small scallops & non-target species
	HIGH PRIORITY (2 & 3 – ranked order)		
2	Sea turtle research	6	Gear: Commercial dredge research
3	Scallop biology research		

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August 13, 2020

Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside Program Competition is Open

NOAA Fisheries, in coordination with the New England Fishery Management Council, is soliciting proposals under the 2021/2022 Atlantic Sea Scallop Research Set-Aside Program.

The solicitation closes October 12, 2020. You can review the solicitation and apply online.

Projects supported under the program must enhance the knowledge of the scallop fishery resource or contribute to the body of information on which scallop management decisions are made.

Questions?

Contact Ryan Silva or Cheryl Corbett.

Priority Setting → **Grant Making & Administration** → Research

- NOAA runs grants process to award RSA based on priorities
- Management and Technical Reviews Convened by NOAA
- Final project selections made by NOAA
- Tracking of RSA usage (pounds / DAS) by NOAA

Priority Setting → Grant Making & Administration → Research

- Partnership between researchers and industry partners.
- Project funding is generated by the harvest of set-aside pounds.

VIMS | William & Mary — Virginia Institute of Marine Science

Coonamessett Farm Foundation

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth SMAST

CFRF Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation

Rutgers

The University of Southern Mississippi

Old Dominion University

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

UMass | Dartmouth

Maine Marine Resources

Northeastern University Marine Science Center

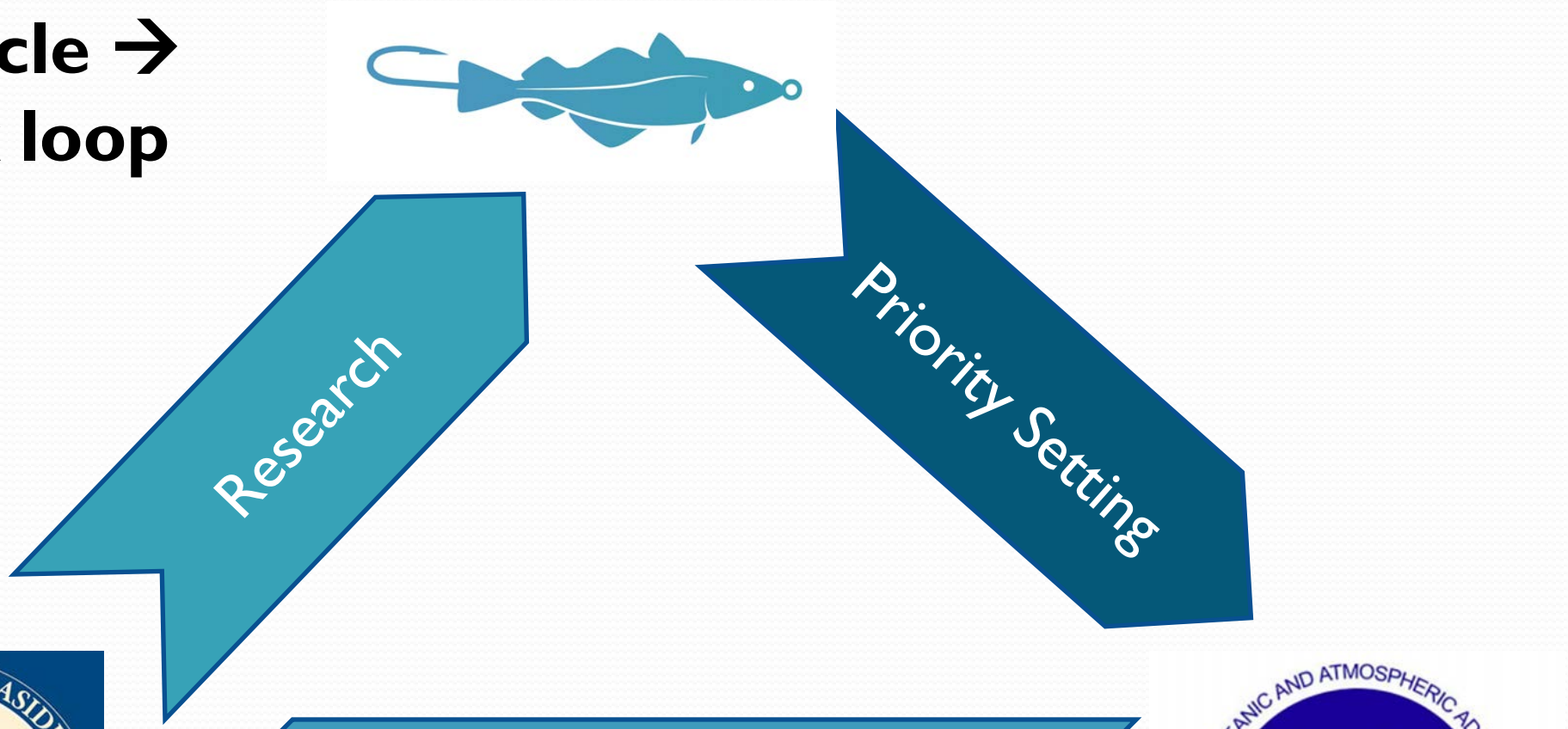
Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Institute

Gulf of Maine — N-Virodredge

The University of Maine

Research Set Aside — Investing in our fisheries since 1999

Grant Cycle → Feedback loop



Research

RSA as a proportion of the fishery's catch limits

- Scallops: Fixed at 1.275 million pounds
  - In 2022: ~4% of the fishery allocation.
  - Closer to 2-3% in recent time period.
- Monkfish: 500 DAS per year
  - ~25,000 DAS allocated; majority is latent.
- Herring: 3% of sub-ACL for each management area.

Research

Research-Industry Partnerships

- Industry engage in RSA in two key ways:
  - Vessels become research platforms.
  - Conduct compensation fishing.
- Partnerships vary by RSA program, and research institution. Examples:
  - Monkfish: DAS paid for by harvesters, may not use vessel for research.
  - Scallop: Vessel used in research, and receives RSA compensation pounds to fish. Proceeds of scallop harvest split between the researchers and vessels.

Research

Converting Set-Aside to Research Dollars: Atlantic Sea Scallops

- Funded projects receive a portion of the overall set-aside as pounds to harvest.
  - Awarded lbs. is based on a forecast of what the future ex-vessel prices will be…
- Researchers distribute RSA to industry partners.
- RSA compensation fishing – proceeds split between vessel and researcher.
- Research funding arrangements vary – fixed price vs. percentage of revenue.
  - After settlement, vessels sends proceeds to researchers.

Research

Atlantic Sea Scallops: Common Price for RSA and Comp Fishing

Year	Common Price
2010	$7.55
2011	$7.64
2012	$9.42
2013	$9.75
2014	$10.50
2015	$12.00
2016	$12.00
2017	$12.00
2018	$10.50
2019	$9.50
2020	$9.50
2021	$12.50
2022	$15.00

- "Common Price" set annually → forecasting…
- Fluctuations in expected price increase and decrease the amount of research that can be funded.

Research Budget	$150,000
Compensation Split	25% (Research)/75% (Vessel)
Common Price of $12	$3 to Research, $9 to Vessel
RSA Pounds Awarded	50,000

- Research institutions generally work with multiple vessels/businesses to harvest the compensation pounds.
  - EX: 5 vessels each get 10,000 lbs of Scallop RSA.

Research

Atlantic Sea Scallops: Program Results

- 2010-2021: ~$147 million awarded over 11-year period.
  - (Average scallop price) x (set-aside lbs) = Total funding.
  - Total funding includes *compensation fishing* and *research*.

Priority	Number of Projects		Funding	
Survey	74	(45%)	$62,376,499	(42%)
Bycatch	40	(24%)	$35,950,182	(27%)
Other	51	(31%)	$40,785,695	(30%)
Grand Total	165		$146,818,013	

Priority Setting

Lessons and Observations

- Questions to consider:
  - **If the research is successful, what action will be taken based on the findings** (e.g., is there a mechanism to use the results, is it within the purview of the entity asked to fund the research), and if so,
  - **Is the research likely to be successful** (or is the likelihood of success commensurate with the importance of the change it might lead to?)
- Trade-offs in the specificity of priorities. Language matters.
  - Too focused → no proposals.
  - Too broad → funded work may not address management needs.
  - NOAA, management/technical reviews use in decision making.
- Consider focus on other funding sources & NOAA programs.
  - S-K, BREP, COCA, FATE, OA.

Research

Lessons and Observations

- RSA project life cycle is much longer than annual grant cycle.
  - Projects completed 2-3 years after priorities set.
  - "Share Day" process aims to supply Council with research updates.
- "Pounds out of the hold" fosters industry buy-in, and heightened accountability for research being funded, and priorities that are set.
- Opportunity to expand the pool of research institutions involved in the program, and the number of industry partners.
- Stock status, species value, and management regime matter.

Resources & Outcomes

- Substantial coordination and resources required to run RSA programs.
  - Council: Staff time, Council member time, meeting time, travel.
  - NOAA: Regional office and science center staff, administration.
  - Researchers: Managing pounds/days with industry partners.
- RSA has and continues to contribute substantially to fisheries management in New England. Key contributions:
  - Reduced interactions with ESA-listed species (turtles), stock assessment and survey advancements, bycatch avoidance and reduction.

Thank you! Questions?

- NEFMC RSA Program Review